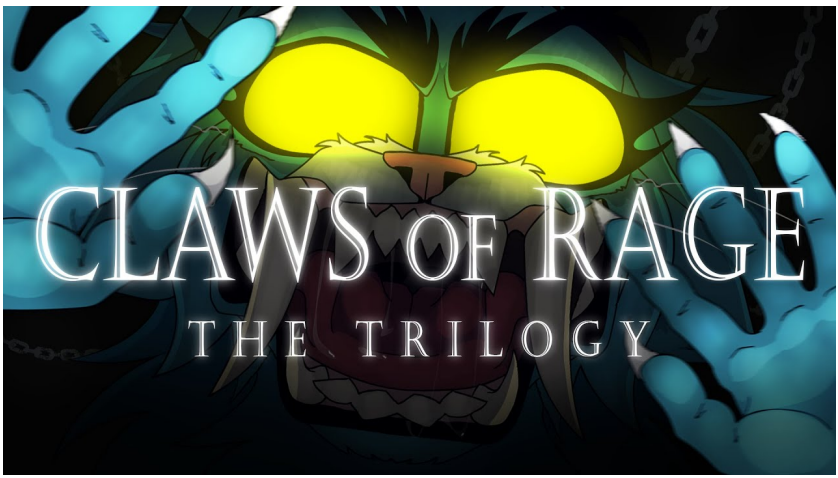
Table of Contents

1. About CoR
2. Chapter 1 - History
3. Chapter 2 - A manic Monday
4. Chapter 3 - Mental breakdown
5. Chapter 4 - A feral cat
6. Chapter 5 - Rivalry
7. Chapter 6 - Captured
8. Chapter 7 - The monster within
9. Chapter 8 - Authority
10. Chapter 9 - The threat
11. Chapter 10 - Who is the bad guy now?
12. Chapter 11 - The UPPER LIMIT
13. Chapter 12 - Therapy
14. Chapter 13 - A starry night
15. Chapter 14 - Suspense and illegal electronics
16. Chapter 15 - Sounds of agony
17. Chapter 16 - Sickness
18. Chapter 17 - Once a predator, always a predator
19. Chapter 18 - Murder
20. Chapter 19 - More animal than citizen
21. Chapter 20 - Nothing but a beast
22. Chapter 21 - The Alpha
23. Chapter 22 - Insanity
24. Chapter 23 - Monster of a mother
25. Chapter 24 - Weakness
26. Chapter 25 - Fear
27. Chapter 26 - Prey and predator
28. Chapter 27 - The first step to reassurance
29. Chapter 28 - 'Limit' in the roots
30. Chapter 29 - Feline connection
31. Chapter 30 - The remedy
32. Chapter 31 - The curse

About CoR



Note 14 oct 2024: this trilogy is currently being REWRITTEN! Please bear in mind you're about to read the old and outdated writing of this alternative universe/fanfic.

Claws of Rage.

A fanfiction book-series based on Ben Bocquelet's "The Amazing World of Gumball".

The books revolve around Nicole Watterson, the iconic short-tempered mother of the main character, in a different setting than what the cartoon is known for. In this alternate universe, Nicole suffers from a chronic, monstrous generation-skipping condition, of which the inspiration came from the canon episode "The Limit", where she shows her feral side. The condition causes her to transform into a fully fledged monstrous version of herself whenever she experiences a trigger.

At the beginning of the story this form, named The Upper Limit, is purely in its mild stages, and the further the plot unfolds, the worse her condition becomes along with it. It starts gaining more ways to take control over Nicole, comes more into connection with her past

and more gets revealed about what it actually is as the chapters go on...

You might've spotted that Nicole is the main focus in this AU/story to lots of people's surprise.

When I started getting more and more interested in the fandom, I noticed that lots of people focused on the most main characters and created alternate versions of them etc. While almost no one really focused on Nicole, and with this I mean her capabilities.

She has shown her short temper and rage troubles throughout the show, but almost no one apparently did something with this lore. With that said, the episode which caught my attention is The Limit.

The ep basically revolves around Nicole having her mega-meltdown, to catch it up a bit, but there hasn't been anything done with this in further episodes; which surprised and kind of disappointed me. So that's when I started developing theories and a more serious, mature look on this struggle of her.

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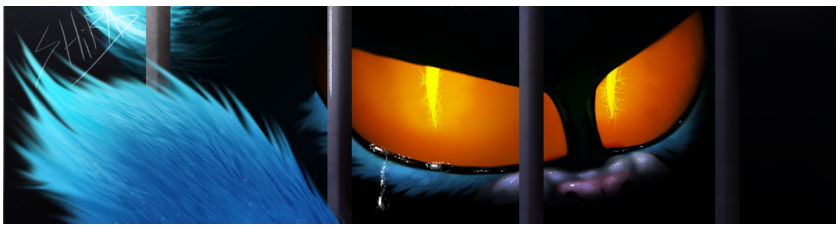
Chapter 1 - History



Nicole's POV

It was a Saturday evening when I spoke with the therapist. He told me I had to try to recall all moments in my past that made a big impact on me. He said it would be the first step to resolve my anger issues, by trying to find the possible cause of it. Haha, funny how he called it 'anger issues'. Because that rage inside of me... is really something else.

But where did it come from?

As a toddler I was quite the sweet but silent one. I never really bothered anyone and always was minding my own business. As a kid I barely had friends. I remember being socially awkward or generally too shy to make contact. But I did know some people who I sometimes could talk with. But my parents preferred me hanging out with the more 'intelligent kids'. Most of the time they were basically children who had rich parents that could afford any extra education programs. But I didn't like those kids. They thought that they were better than anyone else and sometimes even bullied others. So that's the reason I've been quite friendless as a kid. Until the day I met Richard.

We became best friends and our friendship grew into love. My parents disapproved of him, but I didn't care. Even if we had to keep it a secret, our love was unbreakable. Aside from the tons of after-school clubs I attended and the very high expectations from my parents, my spirit was still positive. Thanks to Richard. But then it came... in my teenage years.

I remember the first day of high school, where Richard immediately got bullied. I didn't want to stand out from the crowd on the very first day, but I couldn't handle seeing Richard being treated like that. So I defended him, which caused me being the very next bullying target. I tried to ignore it, until it made me agitated. I became assertive and managed to finally defend myself from those bullies. But things got bad... and even worse. I started to experience a tremendous amount of emotional stress which led me to sometimes completely give up on schoolwork. That angered my parents and made my stress even worse. On top of that, they found out about my ongoing relationship with Richard and spent that whole evening yelling at me... About all the things I did wrong... About how they did everything for me and that I was ungrateful...

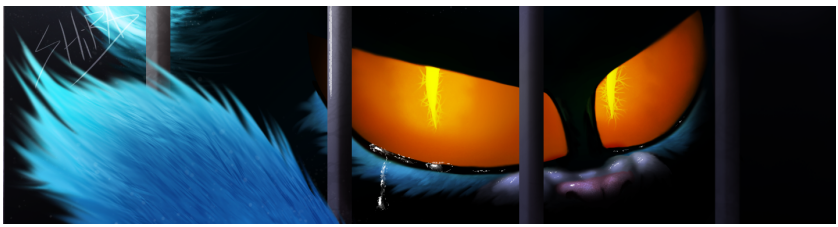
It made me snap. It was all too much and I couldn't take it anymore. My inner cat triggered me to attack my parents, but instead I ran upstairs and smashed everything in my bedroom. I cried. I shouted. I dug my claws into everything that was in my way. I was shocked when I saw the damage I made. I remember even staring at my long, curved and sharp claws in disbelief. It never happened before. My claws came out for the very first time. My parents came running to my room and saw all the destroyed property. They were furious at me and I cried again. A lot. I spent the next week in my room without talking to them. And whenever I came home from school, I would prepare dinner for myself and go straight up to my room.

It was shortly after I turned eighteen when I left my parents. An argument got way out of hand and I straight up packed my stuff and left without thinking twice. I needed rest. I needed another start. And that's when I started living with Richard. I didn't even regret walking out from my parents, because I had him. He taught me to look at life from a different point of view and gave the best advice. He was the one who kept that raging beast inside of me calm. It were the happiest years of my life and here I am now. Three kids, Richard slacking off all day and my many duties brought back the stress I felt years ago. But it was totally fine, I could handle it. Until the incident...

That one moment which changed my life and changed me... It was the time when I chased my family through the supermarket after I

had caught Richard trying to shoplift. But it was also because of all the agitation I had to deal with that day. My kids throwing tantrums, them not obeying me and their constant tries to get candy from the store. I was overcome with rage I never felt before. And if my spine wasn't misaligned by that botched massage back then, I could've actually caught them. Who knows what could've happened then. I was so furious that I completely lost control. And since that day my rage issues became worse. This rage... was something else.

Chapter 2 - A manic Monday



General POV

Monday 5.30PM

[It has been another work day for Nicole as she is on her way home. In the meantime Richard is busy preparing dinner while the kids finish off their homework. After a short while, Nicole enters the house and greets her family. She puts her purse on the living room table and almost falls over when she sits down on the couch. It has been an exhausting shift for her. The kids prepare the dinner table and Richard serves this night's delicate, spaghetti with meatballs. Nicole always loves the way he prepares it.]

Richard: Honey? Are you coming? Dinner is served!

Nicole: [Gets up from the couch and sits down at the table] How wonderful, dear. Thank you for doing the cooking another day.

Richard: No problem, honey.

Nicole: [Turns to the kids] So, how was your day?

Darwin: It was great, Mrs. Mom! It started as a usual crummy Monday, but Anais helped us to finally get motivated for homework. That made our day better.

Gumball: Heck, yeah! I bet miss Simian will be beyond surprised tomorrow when she sees that we did our homework for once! [Laughs]

Nicole: I bet she will. And I'm glad to hear that, boys. What about you, Anais?

Anais: Well, I already had finished my homework, so I didn't mind helping my brothers for once.

Nicole: That's great! I'm so proud of you three.

[The kids and Nicole share a smile. After they finish dinner, the Wattersons make their way into the living room. Anais goes upstairs to take a shower and the boys read their comic books while sitting on the floor next to the television. Richard sits down on the couch and Nicole joins him.]

Richard: So, honey, you haven't told me how your day was yet... How was it?

Nicole: [Sighs deeply] It was fine, but a little more tiring than usual. The spreadsheets from last weekend were apparently due today, so I had double the amount of accountancy work.

[Richard looks at her with a worried expression.]

Nicole: And also, a new employee tried to make contact with me, but accidentally spilled some burning hot coffee on my shirt. He apologized, but I better wash this now. [Points at the stain on her shirt]

[Nicole and Richard both smile at each other, until Richard suddenly notices something. When Nicole told about the accident and pointed at the stain, Richard noticed that her tail was waving in a restless manner. But he noticed something even more unusual; her paws were clawed.]

Richard: Uhm... dear? Are you lying?

Nicole: What? What makes you say that?

Richard: Your tail speaks the truth and are those claws I see?

[Nicole glares at her paws and when she realizes they indeed are clawed, she immediately retracts them. She then looks over her

shoulder and grabs her tail to hold it still.]

Nicole: I- uh...

Richard: Honey! It's okay to tell if something went totally wrong. Not everyone is perfect, you know?

Nicole: I- I just don't want you to feel worried, okay? Trust me dear, I'm totally fine.

Richard: Are you sure?

Nicole: Yes... and I'm sorry, but I'm tired. I better get a little rest now, tomorrow I have the nightshift.

Richard: All right, dear. But just remember that you can tell me anything.

Nicole: I know, honey.

[Nicole gives Richard a kiss and goes into the bedroom after changing her clothes. She crashes down on the bed and lays on her back for a moment, while staring at the ceiling. She murmurs something angry about how her tail and claws deceived her and then closes her eyes.

After some time, Nicole suddenly hears a voice echoing in her head. 'Mom? Mom? Mom!'. Nicole wakes up and gasps, then realizes her own son was calling her. Gumball is sitting on the bed, next to her and she rises up while shaking her head a little.]

Nicole: What's wrong, my little angel?

Gumball: Mom, are you alright?

Nicole: Yes, I'm totally fine. Why?

Gumball: Because you've been out for the entire evening until noon.

Nicole: [Looks at the clock and gasps when she reads 4.00PM] Oh my gosh! It's four o'clock already!

Gumball: You never sleep this long, Mom. Are you sure you aren't ill or anything?

Nicole: No, no. I just had a very rough day yesterday, that's all.

[Nicole gets up from the bed and stretches. Richard comes into the bedroom with a cup of coffee and some toast. Gumball goes upstairs.]

Nicole: Oh Richard, dear. You shouldn't have to.

Richard: [Kisses her forehead] Anything for my loving feline wife!

Nicole: Richard, I overslept! I slept the entire time even when the kids were at school!

Richard: I didn't want to wake you up, honey. You seemed exhausted yesterday and tonight you have the nightshift, right?

Nicole: [Sighs] Oh yeah... Well, thanks for everything anyway, dear.

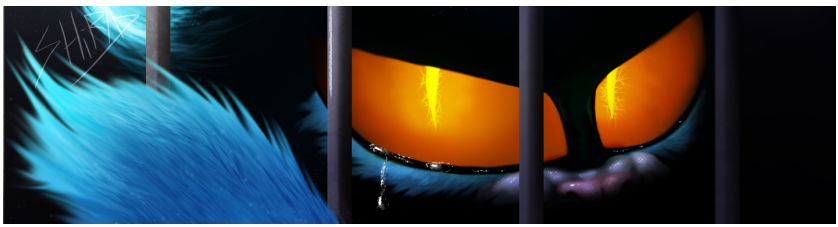
[The couple hug for a while and Nicole wolfs down her breakfast as she was genuinely starving and now is in a hurry. After some time the scene cuts to 5.45PM, when she is all freshen up and prepared for work.]

Darwin: [Worried] Will you be fine, Mrs. Mom? You're not joining us for dinner?

Nicole: Don't worry, dear. I'll be fine. I'm leaving this early to avoid potential traffic jam and I'll get something from the canteen.

[The Wattersons all hug and Richard opens the door for Nicole as she leaves.]

Chapter 3 - Mental breakdown



Tuesday 7.00PM

[The scene cuts to when Nicole has entered the Rainbow Factory. She notices she's very early and buys two sandwiches at the canteen. As she can't enter the office yet, she decides to settle in the lunchroom for a while. She turns on her laptop and starts working on it while eating one of her sandwiches. Suddenly she hears a known voice behind her. "Nicole?"

Nicole turns around and sees it's Mr. Yoshida, her boss.]

Nicole: Oh good evening, sir. What can I do for you?

Yoshida: Well, since you're one of our best employees, I'd like you to cooperate with someone who shows similar talents like you.

Nicole: Thank you, sir. Who will I be working with?

Yoshida: Brandon Scotths, he's quite new but will settle in soon.

[Mr. Yoshida steps aside when an average sized man walks towards them. He's an orange humanoid with black hair, building resemblance of the guard from Elmore Shopping. Some differences are that Brandon only has a thin moustache instead of a goatee and he wears a tight, black suit with a blue tie. Nicole's expression turns shocked for a moment as she realizes it's the new employee who she encountered yesterday.]

Brandon: Why so surprised, Watterson? You thought no one else could have similar talents like you?

[Nicole groans in annoyance but tries to force a smile on her face.]

Nicole: [Annoyed] Nice to meet you again, Brandon.

Brandon: I prefer 'Mr. Scotths', Watterson.

Nicole: All right, Scotths. So, where shall we settle for our tasks?

Yoshida: You both will receive more information about your cooperation later. Right now, it's time to start the nightshift.

Brandon: Good sir, I'll try to continue my paperwork as soon as possible this night, but could I take a small break right now?

Yoshida: Of course you can, take the time you need to settle up. The office has been opened, as I see it's close to half past seven now.

Nicole: Sir, could I please finish my sandwiches before I enter the office?

Yoshida: Duty calls, Nicole. Break time is over.

Nicole: But sir, I haven't had any dinner, I-

Yoshida: Nicole, the spreadsheets. I need them, so finish them.

[Yoshida walks away shamelessly while returning Nicole's sandwich bag to the canteen counter, where it gets chucked in the bin. He is a man of precise schedules and doesn't realise Nicole wasn't telling an excuse. She holds her head tightly as a headache starts acting up.]

Nicole: [Mumbles] Could this shift get any worse?

[She packs her laptop and takes the elevator to the floor where her office is. Extremely annoyed, she starts up her computer and puts the paperwork from her bag on her desk. Brandon walks by behind her and gives her a little push, so that she accidentally drops some papers. She tries to look Brandon angry in the eye, who is clearly waiting for a response from her. But instead she sighs and continues with what she was doing.]

Brandon: Not that feisty anymore, huh?

[Nicole freezes and gives him a stern look.]

Nicole: No, I indeed am not. I left my rage behind me as I want to become a better person, you know?

Brandon: That's way different than how you went berserk in that supermarket, don't you think?

[Nicole suddenly becomes silent and turns towards him while still sitting on her desk chair. She tilts her head.]

Nicole: How do you know about that?

Brandon: Easy, you might have been thinking you could keep it a secret, huh? Well, what about that poor guard you attacked?

Nicole: That guard... I-

Brandon: That guard is my brother, idiot. Can't you notice the resemblance? You attacked my own brother!

[Nicole realizes his similarities in look all make sense now. Her mind becomes restless as the event of the rampage gets recalled by her. Something she'd rather forget... Her pupils become constricted as she silently stares Brandon in the eye in disbelief.]

Brandon: [Immediately noticing Nicole's eyes] You see? You... monster!

[Nicole feels herself getting stressed again and starts to shiver a bit. And out of fear... out of remembrance of the events of The Limit... and due the tension in her body, her claws suddenly show themselves on her paws. Brandon notices this too and calls it.]

Brandon: Heh, I know you're in denial, but *those* claws don't indicate the spirit of a better person!

[Brandon sternly points at Nicole's paws as she looks at them herself.]

Brandon: You-

Nicole: Stop it already!

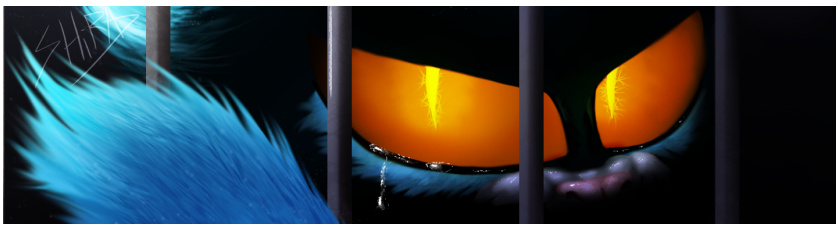
[She covers her eyes with her paws for a second.]

Brandon: What?

Nicole: I said stop! Can't you make me feel any worse about myself right now?!

[Nicole can't take it anymore and runs away to the nearest bathroom where she looks at herself in the mirror as she sheds some tears. She angrily bites on her claws, desperately trying to get rid of them, but obviously fails. She sits down on the floor with her back against the wall and cries for a while, burying her head in her knees.]

Chapter 4 - A feral cat



[Thoughts and memories echo in her mind. She recalls seeing the security guy becoming weaker, as she held him with her paws and constantly thinks about what Brandon said... He's his brother. No wonder why he's acting like such a jerk... Suddenly Nicole becomes clear in her mind again by a voice calling her name. She realizes it's Karen from the secretary who is calling her.]

Karen: Nicole? Are you okay?

[Nicole didn't expect Karen to enter the bathroom, so she quickly gets up while trying to hide that she's been crying.]

Nicole: Y-yes, Karen? What can I do for you?

Karen: I just wanted to check if you were alright. I spoke with Mr. Yoshida and he thinks it's better that you go home now.

Nicole: Ahw, that's generous of him. Because he is worried about me?

Karen: No, because he claims that you cause other employees being distracted.

[Nicole groans agitatedly.]

Karen: But I do think you can do good with some rest. You'll be expected tomorrow night again.

Nicole: All right. Thank you, Karen.

[Nicole walks to the office and grabs her stuff, then exits the building after giving Brandon a threatening glare.

The scene cuts to 3.00AM when Nicole returned back home. The kids are asleep and Richard just finished his midnight snack as he walks out of the kitchen. Nicole, who hasn't been able to eat her sandwiches, collapses on the couch out of exhaustion and hunger. Richard notices this and immediately sits down with her head resting on his chest.]

Richard: H-honey? Are you all right? I didn't expect you to end your shift early.

Nicole: [Tries her best to speak] Uh... I could go home earlier, because of a thing that happened...

Richard: What thing happened?

[Nicole lifts her head to look him in the eye.]

Nicole: I'm too tired to tell... I'll say it tomorrow.

Richard: Alright, honey. But... your muscles, they're so tired out. Have you been doing some kind of marathon?

Nicole: No, no, dear. Ugh... Mr. Yoshida took away my dinner because I had to finish some paperwork on time... Gosh, I feel so dizzy...

Richard: Oh honey! Let me prepare something for you. I don't know how you survived! I eat least every two hours, and you haven't had anything since this afternoon? Honey, it's been almost twelve hours!

Nicole: I know, Richard, don't rub it in my face. Yoshida went too far, but I'm too tired to be angry about it.

Richard: Okay... but ehm, do you have any preference on food?

Nicole: Edible, Richard. Please dear, I can't think clearly.

Richard: Right, uh... of course. How about some baked salmon?

[Nicole sits up straight on the couch and her eyes suddenly narrow when she sees Richard taking the fresh fish out of its package. Her pupils constrict as he holds it in his paws, ready to drop it in the pan. Nicole has no idea what's going through her; her blood rush increases speed and her muscles tense. Then immediately after, she pounces from the couch into Richard's direction, snatching the salmon out of his paw with her teeth and lands on all fours behind him. Richard gasps and turns off the stove while looking at his wife, who devours the fish like a feral feline. After Nicole finished the fish, she regains her normal senses and gasps when she sees what she's been doing and realizes that she crouches on all fours. She immediately jumps up and gets on her hind legs again while wiping away some grease from her mouth. Nicole and Richard stare at each other in silence for a moment.]

Nicole: Gosh, I- I know what you're gonna say, dear. But I don't know what's going on either...

Richard: [Chuckles] Well, *someone* was hungry...

Nicole: I- uh... Richard, let's just forget this, shall we?

Richard: Pff honey, it's fine! Your boss went too far when he took away your sandwiches. If I weren't such a goofy bun, I'd teach him a lesson!

Nicole: [Laughs] Ahw, dear. But, thanks for the salmon, I guess?

Richard: No problem, even though I didn't have to prepare it.

Nicole: [Gets a little nervous] But Richard, please don't tell the kids about this. They'd be terrified.

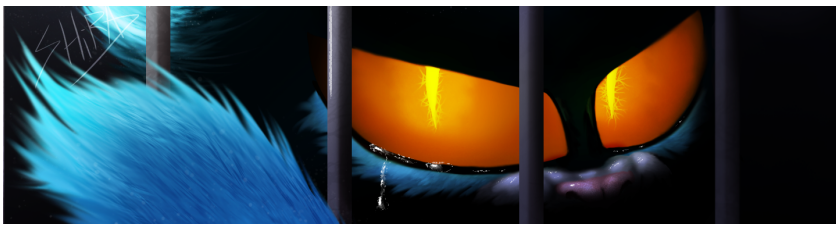
Richard: You're safe honey. I will keep my mouth shut.

Nicole: Thank you. [Sighs] Gosh this was embarrassing...

[Nicole quickly changes into her pyjamas and lays down on the bed. Richard joins her and immediately falls asleep. Nicole is still awake, even though she was exhausted earlier. She keeps turning around, but can't seem to get some sleep. She is too worried... Thoughts about Brandon go through her head. Normally she's able to get rid

of bullies easily, but this time is way different. This person is the brother of the security guy who she had attacked. Suddenly she sees it in front of her eyes again; she recalls seeing the guard aging rapidly while he powerlessly tried to loosen himself from her grip. She hears everything again... The scream of the security guy and her growl when her eyes lit up...]

Chapter 5 - Rivalry



[Suddenly Nicole wakes up, gasping. She reads 6.42AM on the clock and realizes it was a nightmare. A nightmare which actually happened. As Nicole is fully awake, she decides to already prepare for the day, even though she didn't sleep much. But she is too scared to fall asleep again and feels miraculously less tired. After taking a shower and having breakfast, she prepares some coffee and settles at the dining table. As she sips some of her coffee, she checks her feed on Elmore Plus. A picture of a Rainbow Factory employee pops up with the caption "Fun English high tea after nightshift!". Nicole sighs as she wishes she could've stayed longer last night. But then she sees a post from Mr. Yoshida where Brandon is tagged in. She visits Brandon's profile out of pure curiosity and stumbles upon a post which enrages her.

It's a picture of her when she ran away to the bathroom during her emotional breakdown. The caption says: "If the enemy burns you, you burn them harder.". Nicole raises an eyebrow. Some comments on the post say: "Is she really a softy?" and "Where's her rage?". But then she reads comments that make her snarl out loud. Someone asked: "Is she your enemy then? Aren't you taking this too far?", on which Brandon replied: "She attacked my brother, of course she's an enemy. She has to pay! I can show you proof if you don't believe me.". Nicole can't believe what she's reading. He literally challenged her into being his enemy and wants to expose her as the monster

she was in the incident?]

Nicole: [Speaks out loud] Now you're going too far.

[She immediately direct messages Brandon and demands that he needs to delete the post and politely asks if she can talk it through with him to come to a new understanding. But after some minutes he replies with a threatening message that her time is over and she went too far. "Prepare for your last shift tonight, Watterson." he finally sends. "What? You're getting me fired?" Nicole replies, but he shamelessly blocks her without giving an answer. Nicole stares blankly for a while, then puts away her coffee cup and grabs the grocery list. She needs some distraction, but tonight? She'll be prepared to defend her pose.

The clock reads 9.00AM when Nicole pushes her shopping cart through the aisle. After grabbing almost all the goods on the list, she notices the Hexagon lady talking with the security guy who physically recovered from the incident. They are at the back of the supermarket where earlier the security guy was adjusting some cables in the electric regulating box. It's the same regulating box which Nicole damaged when she lost control. The security guy suddenly notices her staring at him and she immediately avoids eye-contact. She nervously keeps walking towards the checkout and pays for her groceries. She realizes it's been almost five months since the incident, but still feels guilty. Before walking out of the store after paying, she looks behind her shoulder one more time and sees that the security guy still is talking with the Hexagon lady like nothing happened. After putting the groceries in the trunk, she checks her phone before starting the engine. She reads some lovely messages from her three kids, who say that they got to class on time and Richard who asks if everything is fine. Nicole replies to him with a calming message that she is doing well. But she isn't doing well. Not at all actually. She still feels the guilt about the incident and worries about tonight. She calms herself down by taking a few deep breaths and then makes her way home.

Back home, the scene cuts to 5.00PM when the Wattersons are preparing for dinner. Nicole has been doing housework all day and now decides to eat dinner *before* leaving for work. After an almost silent, calm dinner Nicole leaves the house. She kisses her family

goodbye and gets in the car. Richard stays standing in the doorstep for a while with a worried expression, but eventually goes back inside.]

Wednesday 8.15PM

[Nicole rushes inside as she is a bit late due to an accident which occurred on her way to the Rainbow Factory. She quickly settles up in the office and manages to be ready before Mr. Yoshida comes checking on her.]

Yoshida: Good evening, Nicole.

Nicole: Good evening, sir. I suppose I can give the nightshift another try?

Yoshida: Of course. But please stay focused without your emotions running over you.

Nicole: I'm so sorry about yesterday, sir. It wasn't a good day for me.

Yoshida: Alright. That reminds me, you better make up with Brandon.

Nicole: Why, sir? He is the one who had pity on me first.

Yoshida: I don't think so. He told me there was something up with you, but couldn't tell me what it was yet. Perhaps you want to say it yourself, Nicole?

Nicole: Wait- He has told you?

Yoshida: Not yet, but I do wish for an answer.

Nicole: I- I don't think I can tell you, sir.

Yoshida: And why not?

Nicole: Please, I need you to trust me on this one.

Yoshida: As a man with manners, I respect your refusal. But at least

try making up with Brandon. He looked quite emotionally hurt.

Nicole: [Mumbles] That darn manipulating lair...

Yoshida: What was that, Nicole?

Nicole: Ehm- Nothing, sir.

[Yoshida nods and walks away, leaving Nicole behind. Nicole immediately gets up from her chair and walks sternly towards Brandon, who is getting some coffee from the machine. He notices her and stops to settle in a sassy pose.]

Brandon: Oh hi, Watterson. I see you got the message?

Nicole: Scotths! What in the world do you think you're doing?

Brandon: I warned you. Your last shift.

Nicole: You can't just ruin me like this! I have a whole family to look after!

Brandon: Then you shouldn't have chosen motherhood, amiright?

[Those words enrage Nicole. Did he really just doubt her life choices?]

Nicole: What I do with my life is none of your concern. Can we please talk this through? Or press me some charges? I already had gotten a restraining order some time ago.

Brandon: Exactly. But you haven't learned your lesson yet, have you?

Nicole: [Now annoyed] What? What do you mean?

Brandon: Nicole, you're still a threat to others, can't you see that?

Nicole: I swear, I'm becoming more stable and calm now.

Brandon: Oh really? Then how come that rage of yours hasn't vanished yet?

Nicole: What? It's part of me, Scotths. I can't change that!

Brandon: Then get some therapy or something!

Nicole: But I already- Wait! Don't tell me what to do! You're the one who's going too far now. You're the one who's attempting to get me fired!

Brandon: Not attempting, Watterson, achieving. I'm going to speak with Yoshida right now.

Nicole: Oh no, you're not!

Brandon: You're challenging me? Nothing can stop me, Watterson, and it's time to pack your stuff. I'm sure Mr. Yoshida won't like to hear that a rampaging monster is one of his employees.

Nicole: Okay, that's it... That's IT! You can give me an emotional breakdown, you can bully me all you like, you can threaten me on Elmore Plus, but you cannot get me *fired*!

Brandon: This will teach you how it feels to get burned, Watterson.

[Nicole can no longer take it and snarls while she grabs hold onto Brandon's arm.]

Nicole: [Speaks with a deep voice] Listen here, you. You're messing with the wrong cat. You have no idea how I feel or what I've been going through so far. So shut up or that skin of you won't be so scar less anymore.

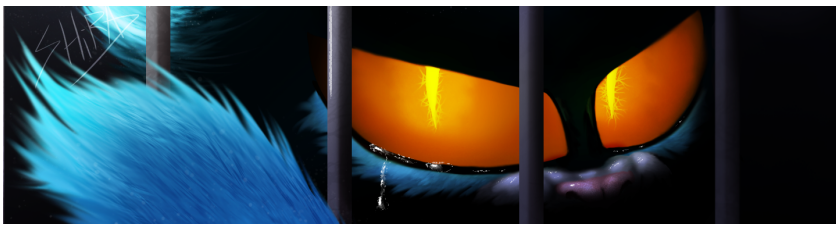
Brandon: Oh, so now your rage returns, huh? What happened to 'becoming more stable and calm'?

Nicole: Oh no, no, no. You've gone too far, young man. Just like my family back then, you pushed me over... [Chuckles]

Brandon: [Mockingly] Over what now?

Nicole: My... LIMIT!

Chapter 6 - Captured



[Nicole's claws unsheathe as she tightens her grip. Brandon shrieks out of pain by the sharp claws that dig into his arm and watches in terror how her eyes change. Her pupils constrict and become glowing yellow. She grits her teeth as she suddenly realizes what she's doing and Brandon manages to escape from her grip due her being disoriented for a while. A heavy headache spikes up but she refuses to let it go. She runs after Brandon, who rushes down the stairs and desperately tries to open the locked door. He realizes he's on the wrong floor, the parking lot. He wants to run upstairs again, but his path is blocked by Nicole. She slowly comes closer, breathing heavily and with a twitchy eye.]

Nicole: [In a deep voice] I warned *you*... You've gone too far.

Brandon: Who's the one that's going too far now?! Are you insane? Am I gonna end up like my brother, y-you-

Nicole: [Becomes a little clear in her mind] Stop! Please... stop. I don't want to hurt you, okay? I don't know what's wrong with me either. Please, just give me a chance to make up.

Brandon: [Less afraid] No, Watterson. It doesn't work like that. I've had enough! You can't even control yourself and you could've killed me!

Nicole: You... don't need to... RUB IT IN!

[Nicole's anger returns as fast as she pounces, straight onto Brandon and hisses while scratching him onto the eye with her claws. He

screams in pain as he covers his eye and throws the feisty blue cat off him. He rings the fire-alarm and before Nicole knows it, she's being captured with chains and gets struck by a tranquilizer dart. Everything turns black...]

Thursday 0.32AM

[Nicole gasps as she suddenly wakes up. She immediately groans by the large headache that spikes up. But when she tries to hold her head with her paws, she realizes that they are chained to the wall. She looks around and sees that she's inside a cell at the police office. Not only her wrists are chained up, but also her neck and legs. She angrily tries to release herself from the ironwork, but fails. Suddenly an officer and Richard come in and walk towards the bars of Nicole's cell. Richard gazes his arm through to caress his wife's face and Nicole immediately falls on her knees, crying in shock.]

Officer: Mr. Watterson, you're free to take her home with you now. But you'll have to make an appointment with the therapist as soon as possible.

[Richard nods in understanding and the officer releases Nicole. She runs into Richard's arms and hugs him tightly, as tears roll down her cheeks.]

Nicole: R-Richard, what happened?! What is wrong with me?!

Richard: You just had another Limit-incident, honey. Don't you worry, you'll be getting therapy soon and I know what can cheer you up.

Nicole: I'm so sorry that you had to come here at this time...

Richard: It's okay, I'm so worried about you!

Nicole: Richard, listen. Something weird is happening to me and I don't know how. I-

[Her headache causes her to interrupt her own words. She clenches her fists on her head and grunts a little out of pain.]

Richard: [Comforts her] There, there, honey. You're too stressed

right now. We can talk about this later. Now you need some rest.

[The couple look at each other with worried expressions and silently make their way home. At home, the kids are asleep and Richard puts a paper bag on the kitchen counter. Nicole feels that she has become calmer and her headache faded a little. She notices the brown bag.]

Nicole: Dear, what's that? [Points at it]

Richard: Oh yeah, that are some meds to keep you calm in the meantime, while we wait for the therapy to start.

[Nicole sighs in relief and gives Richard a kiss. After a while, they both changed into their pyjamas and are laying in bed.]

Nicole: Richard... Do you know why they tied me up like that?

Richard: Well, the officer told me that you went berserk towards an employee and were so aggressive, they had to sedate you like that.

Nicole: What? I- Oh... I remember fighting with Brandon, but... gosh! It happened again, didn't it? I went too far!

Richard: Mr. Yoshida is the one who called the law enforcement. But I don't know if he's going to fire you or not.

Nicole: [Sighs] It's fine, it's what I deserve... But wait! It's not what you deserve! Richard, I can't get fired! I'm responsible for the family and-

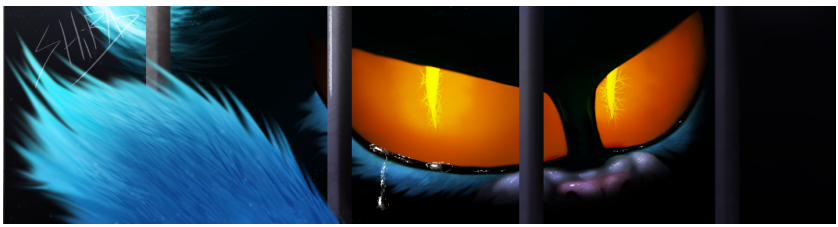
Richard: [Hushes her] Don't you worry... Try to get some sleep now and we'll figure this out tomorrow, alright?

Nicole: Alright... Well, goodnight dear.

Richard: 'Night.

[Richard turns off the light and they both dwell off in sleep.]

Chapter 7 - The monster within



4.00AM

[Nicole wakes up because of her headache, which is suddenly getting worse. While holding her head with one paw, she makes her way upstairs to the bathroom. She changes into her work uniform and rinses her face with cold water. She closes her eyes for a while, breathing heavily. She is scared. She feels weak again for the first time in years. After gaining back a little more strength, she dials the phone number of her boss. It isn't the end of the nightshift yet, so he should pick it up, Nicole thinks. After some seconds, she hears Yoshida's voice at the other side of the line.]

Yoshida: Elmore Rainbow Factory, founder's office. How can I help?

Nicole: Hello sir, it's me...

Yoshida: Nicole? I didn't expect your call.

Nicole: [Sighs] Look sir, I just wanted to tell you that I'm sorry. I'm deeply ashamed of what happened.

Yoshida: I honestly have no words for what happened. But those would be more than enough to explain why you're fired.

Nicole: What? I- I'm fired?

Yoshida: Karen sent you an email about it, or didn't she? I thought you already knew. But anyway, Watterson, apparently you've had a

similar incident before. I can't believe you've still been working here all this time after that event. I hope my words were clear enough for you.

Nicole: Did- Ugh, Brandon must've told you everything!

Yoshida: He did, but you leave him alone! You've already done enough damage. Are you really going to make people's lives worse?

Nicole: Sir, I don't think you understand my-

Yoshida: Whatever you suffer from isn't my business. Your desk is being emptied, Watterson. Contract's closed.

[Before Nicole can say another word, Yoshida hangs up on her and she drops her phone. She's fired. One of her biggest fears has come true. She gets overcome by so many emotions. She doesn't know what to do; her head hurts. But then she feels it... deep inside... it's coming out...

Nicole walks downstairs towards the kitchen to get a glass of water, but halfway in the living room she suddenly freezes in her steps and falls onto her knees. Her body starts trembling as her headache only gets worse. She doesn't know what is happening and her heart starts pounding heavily. A stabbing pain in her mouth makes her grunt and she feels like her gums are burning. Her fangs become longer and all her teeth turn predatory sharp. She holds her head tightly as she no longer can contain the pain. Everything hurts and burns.

The fur on her back goes upright as her tensed muscles cause her shirt to rip a bit. Her claws unsheathe and she tries to reach for the medicine in the paper bag, but fails to do so. She digs her claws deeply into the carpet and manages to rise up a bit. Everything hurts too bad and she starts losing control over her mind. She helplessly sees her reflection in the glass television screen and gasps. She can't believe what she sees. And before she knows it, she reaches her final point and her eyes start glowing yellow again. Stress turns into anger, anger turns into rage and she lets it all out in a yell, which quickly lowers its pitch into a roar. Nicole tries to speak up, but her voice doesn't sound like hers anymore...]

Nicole: [In a deep, monstrous voice] What have I become? They all were right about me... I... am... **a MONSTER**!

[She flees up in her rage and runs around in the living room on all fours, desperately trying to tire herself out. She no longer has control over herself. She feels overcome by such intense anger which she never felt before. She suddenly stops running when she is next to the bedroom door and hears Richard yawning. He must've woken up by her yelling. She stands upright and opens the door while her claws dig deeply into the wood. When Richard notices her, she shakes her head and regains a bit of control. Before he can even get shocked, she runs into his arms, crying helplessly. Panting and with tears rolling down her cheeks she looks him in the eye. Richard doesn't know what exactly to do when he sees his wife all ragged up. Her sharp teeth and glowing eyes scare him, reminding him of the chase in the supermarket. But she is more broken than angry. He calms a bit down while Nicole holds his paws.]

Nicole: Richard, I'm scared... Everything hurts a-and I don't know what's happening to me... Brandon was right! Look what I've done!

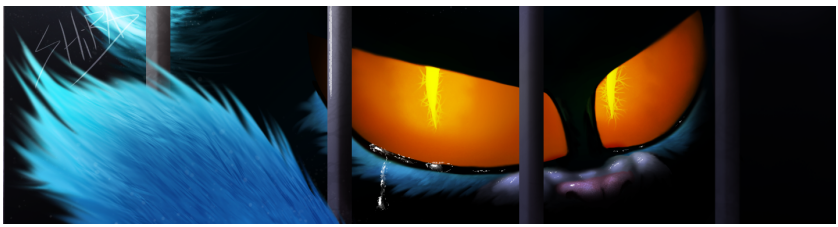
Richard: [Hushes her] Honey, remember; breathe in, breathe out.

[Nicole tries to calm down by taking deep breaths, but it's no use. Her pain returns and she lowers her head in defeat.]

Nicole: I... [Grunts] Help!

[Richard hugs her tightly while stroking her fur. They both don't know what to do and Nicole feels herself getting weaker. She growls out of pain and Richard quickly gets the paper bag from the dinner table. After taking in the medicine, Nicole passes out as all her muscles cool down and her headache fades.]

Chapter 8 - Authority



7.00AM

[Richard is still asleep when Nicole gets woken up by a known voice. It's her lovable adoptive son.]

Darwin: Mrs. Mom? Sorry to wake you up, but we have a little problem.

Nicole: [Gets up and stretches] Wha-What is it, honey?

[Darwin leads his adoptive mother upstairs to the kids' room. Anais is packing her bag and Gumball snoozes.]

Darwin: Gumball doesn't want to wake up because of his so-called '10 minute schedule of hurry'. He claims that he manages to prepare in such a short time span, so he can sleep longer.

Nicole: Why won't you let him? You can't learn any better than from your own mistakes.

Gumball: [Half-awake] Mom, he wants me to finish my part of the science project. But I'll manage that later...

Darwin: No, dude! It's due today and you haven't even started yet!

[Nicole sternly grabs the covers and pulls them off her son.]

Gumball: What the-?

Nicole: It's not nice of you to leave your brother hanging like that in such a project.

Gumball: But Mooom-

Nicole: Gumball. Get up. Now.

[Gumball snorts in annoyance and gets up to change in the bathroom. Nicole smiles by her visible authority and turns to Darwin and Anais.]

Nicole: You both got up early by yourselves, I'm so proud of you.

Anais: Thank you, Mom. But uhm... are you feeling alright?

Darwin: We're worried about you, Mrs. Mom.

Nicole: Oh- uh... There's nothing wrong. Why do you ask?

Anais: Because you clearly had a rough night.

[Anais points at Nicole's damaged work uniform, which she forgot to change before falling asleep.]

Nicole: I- uh...

Anais: Mom... What happened?

Darwin: Have you been fighting?

Nicole: I have... [Sighs] With myself.

[Darwin and Anais give her a confused look. Nicole sighs again and crouches down to look the two in the eye.]

Nicole: Look, please don't be worried when I tell you this. But you need to know the truth...

[Darwin and Anais nod in understanding.]

Nicole: Yesterday evening, there has been an incident with an employee which caused me being fired right now.

[Darwin and Anais gasp.]

Nicole: But that's none of your concern. I will apply for a new job

as soon as possible. My problem right now, is that there's something wrong with me. And I don't know what.

Anais: W-what's wrong then?

Nicole: I- I can't explain it... It'll frighten you-

Darwin: It won't, Mrs. Mom. Nothing can be scarier than the incident at the supermarket. We can take it.

[Nicole and the two stare at each other for a short while. Then Nicole sighs.]

Nicole: Well... I feel like my rage has gotten a mind of its own. Last night I felt pain I never felt before... And when I saw my reflection, I saw this... monster staring back at me.

Darwin: But, what does that mean?

Nicole: It's becoming harder and harder for me to contain my anger. Sometimes it gets out of hand and then I act in a way I never would!

[Darwin and Anais look worriedly at their mother.]

Nicole: But I don't want you to worry about it. I'll figure this out. Now off you go to school.

[Nicole feels a bit of regret that she told them this. She knows that her kids would be worried anyway. Darwin and Anais join Gumball as they get on the school bus. Nicole looks at them out of the window with a smile, then turns around and sits down on the floor with her back against the wall. Her concern turns into sadness and her eyes tear up. What is she supposed to do now? She lost her job, lost her reputation and worst of all, she lost control... She starts crying helplessly while hiding her face with her paws. She can't feel any worse at the moment. Richard, who just returned from the bathroom, comes downstairs and immediately runs towards his wife as soon as he notices her crying. He sits down and pulls her on his lap, holding her tightly while trying to comfort her. After a while, Nicole becomes a little calmer and looks her husband in the eye.]

Nicole: Richard... What is happening to me?... I don't know what to do anymore. Everything- hurts- so bad!

[She feels her headache return again and pinches the bridge of her nose. Richard quickly grabs the paper bag from the dinner table, but before giving her the medicine, he calls the psychiatry. After a very short while, he returns to the living room.]

Nicole: Brandon... he did this to me! He brought the rage back up again, which I wished was gone! Gosh... if that incident at the supermarket didn't occur, none of this would've happened!

Richard: Nicole, chill. Breathe. You can't change the past, but you can control your own future. Because, like how our oldest son taught me, the future starts now.

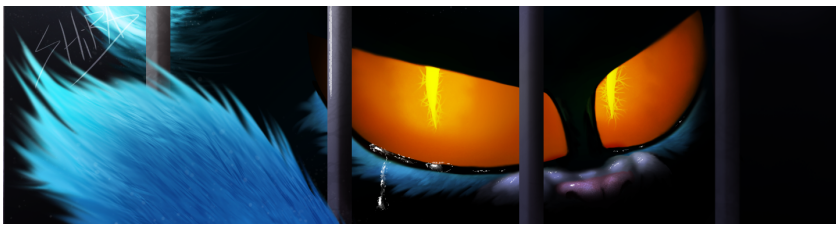
Nicole: [Sighs] You're right. Well, let's see if the therapy will help.

Richard: The appointment is set for Saturday at eight in the evening. I told them it is an emergency.

Nicole: Thanks, dear.

[Nicole takes in the medicine and goes to the kitchen to prepare a cup of tea. She eventually settles at the dinner table and reads the newspaper as she relaxes a bit.]

Chapter 9 - The threat



3.00PM

[The scene cuts to when the Watterson kids are back home. They are in their room and Darwin sits down next to his fishbowl. Gumball wants to grab a game from the closet, but notices Anais doing some intense research. She quickly types on the computer with an examining frown on her face.]

Gumball: What are you doing, sis?

Anais: Darwin? Gumball? Read this. Remember what Mom told us this morning? And we told you at lunch, Gumball.

Darwin: Ohw, yeah. The thing about Mrs. Mom's anger. Why?

Anais: Because I found something on the internet about it. I'm not fully sure if this applies to Mom too, but it could be.

Gumball: Is it a disorder?

Anais: The website says it is. It's a kind of Intermittent Explosive Disorder. But different from IED, it comes in stages. If the person who suffers from it ever reached an upper point in their anger, it can cause bad consequences. We all recovered after the supermarket incident, except Mom who is only suffering more. If she really is having a harder time to control herself or starts believing that she's a bad person; something *worse* than the supermarket incident has occurred.

[Gumball and Darwin gasp.]

Darwin: What could Mrs. Mom possibly have done...

Gumball: Our mother... is becoming a raging psycho?

Anais: Chill you both. There is a cure for this. The suffering of the person with the disorder will be dissolved overtime, as long as they've had enough rest for at least a month. So if Mom relaxes for a change, she'll get better.

Gumball: But what about in the meantime? And will the disorder be permanently gone?

Anais: The disorder won't be gone forever. But as long as Mom doesn't get pushed over her limit again, nothing is wrong. But now she has to get through it.

Darwin: Mr. Dad told that Mrs. Mom is going to the therapist Saturday. So everything will be fine, right?

Anais: Yeah, that's true. But at least we now have an idea of what she's dealing with.

Gumball: Nice info though, sis. But whaddaya say, Elmorepoly or cards?

[Darwin and Anais shrug and the three play a card game together. In the meantime, Richard is watching television with Nicole next to him. She tries to stay calm while reading a book, but shivers with a blanket wrapped around her. Richard gives her a glass of water as she checks her phone for a moment. She sips some of her water and suddenly gets called by an unknown number. She gets up from the couch and looks at Richard before picking up.]

Nicole: Hello?

Voice at the other side of the line: Hello, Watterson. I know this is you.

Nicole: ...Brandon?

[Her heart starts beating faster.]

Brandon: You ruined me, Nicole! My left eye is now permanently blind because of your darn claws! You psychotic beast. How are you still wandering on the streets.

[Nicole lowers her ears in grief.]

Nicole: What do you want from me? I already feel worse enough!

Brandon: I'm gonna break you, until you feel my revenge. I dare you to come to the alley in South Elmore. I will be waiting there for you.

Nicole: What? No way! I'm not getting into a fight. Leave me alone!

Brandon: You better come, kitty. Or else...

Nicole: Stop mocking me like this! I'm so done with you! Look what you made me do!

Brandon: Is that a yes or a no?

Nicole: A gosh darn NO, idiot!

Brandon: Bad choice, bad choice... You will regret this... But now, I have more important business to attend to.

[Brandon hangs up on Nicole. She freezes in disbelief of this call. He dares to threaten her? And he collected a group of people that are against her?]

Nicole: [Out loud] YOU GOSH DARN MANIPULATOR!

[Richard jumps from his wife's yelling and sees how she furiously crushes the glass in her paw with ease. Her eyes stare blankly at the floor while she's breathing heavily. Richard gets up from the couch and hugs her to calm her down. After a moment, she tells him what Brandon said on the phone call.]

Nicole: I don't know anymore, Richard... How am I going to deal with all this?

[She picks up the broken glass and throws it in the bin.]

Richard: We will find a way. We're visiting the therapist Saturday, so maybe he has a clue.

Nicole: [Sighs] Yeah, true...

Richard: Now come here again.

[Richard sits back down on the couch with Nicole next to him again. He hugs her and she calmly continues reading. The rest of the day and the next morning have been quite normal until that Friday afternoon...]

Friday 4.00PM

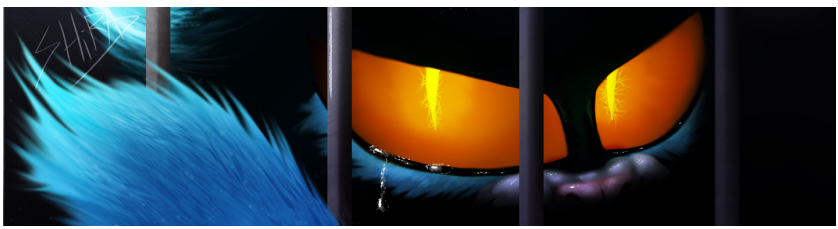
[Richard and Nicole are having coffee in the dining room. Nicole sees that it's four in the afternoon already and wonders why the kids aren't home yet. She and Richard share a worried expression and she calls Principle Brown. But after a short conversation with him, she starts to feel really stressed.]

Nicole: Richard? The kids aren't at school either. Brown said that they left with the school bus, like any other student.

Richard: Oh my goodness! Should we call the police?

[Nicole nods and wants to call the emergency helpline, but gets interrupted by Darwin storming into the house. He is panting, all tired out with eyes that have seen terror.]

Chapter 10 - Who is the bad guy now?



Darwin: Mrs. Mom! He has them... [Pants] He has... Gumball and... Anais.

[Nicole runs to him to calm him down.]

Nicole: Who has them?

Darwin: I don't know... We were just walking home from the bus stop and a man with a group showed up, and took them. I managed to escape... but I don't think they're safe, Mrs. Mom! [Starts sobbing]

[Nicole hushes him, but suddenly gets called by the same number as yesterday and picks it up.]

Brandon: I warned you... bad choice.

Nicole: What? You? You have *my kids*?

Brandon: Yes, but they are absolutely safe with me, for now.

Nicole: Who's psychotic now?! Release them, you vile kidnapper!

Brandon: You better watch your tone... Come pick them up, it'll be fine. Unfortunately this seems to be the only way to get you to obey me.

Nicole: Alright, alright, whatever you want. I'm coming. But don't

you *dare* hurt them!

Brandon: I won't. Now hurry up, the clock's ticking. [Hangs up]

[Nicole narrows her eyes and her pupils constrict.]

Richard: Was that...?

Nicole: He has the kids, Richard! No time to explain, I got to go!

[She sprints to the car and restlessly drives off. She furiously clenches her paws on the steering wheel. What is he even thinking?! He is the one that goes way too far now!

After rushing through the traffic Nicole finally arrives at the alley in South Elmore, which Brandon was talking about. She locks the car and sprints into the alley without exactly knowing where to go. Suddenly she hears a sound coming from behind. Her ears twitch and out of reflex, she dodges a punch attack of an unknown man who was hiding in the shadows. She freezes in her steps and sees another man and woman running up to her while trying to hit her with bats. Her fighter instinct rises up and she karate-kicks the first man, making him fall over. The other man and woman come from behind her, but she jumps backwards over them and pushes their backs down, so that they are trapped in a kneeling position. The first man got up again and tries to stab her with a knife, but she disarms him with ease and manages to keep him down by threatening him with her right paw, which is now clawed. Suddenly she hears a laugh coming from the shadows. She turns her head, but still keeps the other man and woman down and has her claw on the first man's throat. Brandon reveals himself as he walks forward, out of the shadows. He now has a black bandage covering his left eye.]

Brandon: Great show, great show, Nicole. I am happy you came.

[Nicole narrows her eyes and hisses.]

Nicole: Where are my kids, you bastard. Or your henchmen won't get out of here alive.

Brandon: Whoo, we got a feisty one here, I see.

Nicole: *Where* are my kids, Brandon.

[Brandon steps aside and Gumball and Anais come running to their mother. Nicole immediately lets go of the men and woman, and hugs her kids tightly.]

Nicole: Gosh, I'm so glad you're alright. I'm so sorry! Now, let's go home.

Brandon: [Laughs] How sweet, a family reunion.

[Nicole turns her head to Brandon and gives him a furious glare.]

Nicole: Kids, wait for me in the car. I still have some unfinished business to attend to.

[Gumball and Anais nod and quickly escape to the car. Nicole stands up straight and sternly walks towards Brandon. Her fur on her back rises up, her claws unsheathe and her ears lower as she takes every step.]

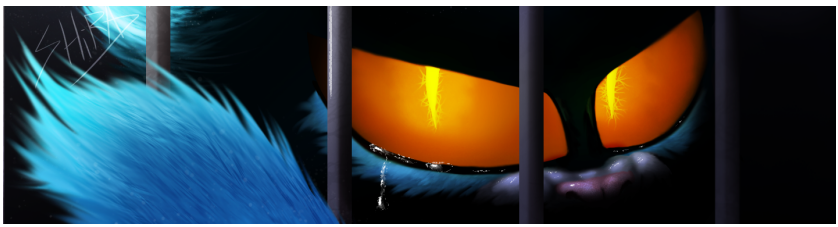
Nicole: What were you *thinking*? WHAT do you think you're doing?! I don't even regret scratching you in the eye. Oh boy, Scotths... I'm so gonna END YOU!

[Nicole aggressively stands in front of him. She angrily raises her arm as she tries to attack him, but Brandon manages to block her.]

Brandon: I wouldn't try that if I were you.

[Nicole gasps and unexpectedly gets struck in the neck with a taser, which is on full power. Her muscles tense so hard that she falls to the floor, while her limbs jerk due the electricity. Before passing out, she sees that it's Brandon's brother, the security guard from Elmore Shopping, who fired the taser. Everything goes black...]

Chapter 11 - The UPPER LIMIT



[In the meantime Gumball and Anais heard everything and call their father, who rushes to them in the other car. Luckily for them, Brandon spends a long time talking with his gang and Richard manages to arrive on time. Richard immediately called the police when he left from home and tells the kids that they'll be here in any minute. Brandon notices Richard talking to the kids and runs towards them.]

Brandon: Did you darn kids just call for help?! Are you going to ruin this whole thing for me?!

[Brandon aggressively walks towards Anais and Gumball, but Richard stops him. Darwin shows himself from behind his adoptive father's car and joins his siblings in fright.]

Richard: Don't you touch my kids! Now tell me, where is my wife?! There's no escape for you sir, the cops are on their way.

Brandon: The cops? Darn it! Your wife and I have a little argument to settle which is none of your business!

Richard: A little argument?! It's *my* wife who you're hurting! What are you even trying to achieve?!

Brandon: Personal revenge, bunnyman.

[Brandon gives Richard a passive aggressive pat on the shoulder and sprints away while dragging the passed out Nicole with him.]

Richard: Hey you come back here!

[Richard tries his best, despite his heavy weight, to sprint after Brandon as quickly as possible and freezes when he sees the most dangerous scene in front of him. Brandon is standing on a broad industrial building and lets Nicole hang over the border. The building isn't high, but high enough for a fall to become fatally.]

Brandon: No step closer, or I will let her go.

Richard: Okay, okay! But why are you doing this? Have you gone insane?!

Brandon: Your wife is the one insane here! She was trying to kill me! And monsters like these need to be ended!

Richard: No! That's untrue! She suffers from mental problems, but she isn't a monster! Don't let her fall please, I beg you!

Brandon: She-

[Brandon gets interrupted by a voice underneath him. A deep, terrifying voice that keeps him silent for a second in disbelief.]

Nicole: [In a deep voice] No. You're right, Brandon...

[Brandon lets go of Nicole, who has woken up again and she uses her claws to climb back up onto the building. She stands still for a moment while furiously looking Brandon in the eye. Her shoulders and tail still twitch from the electric shock, but her weakness has faded.]

Brandon: W-what?

Nicole: I... indeed am... a MONSTER!

[Nicole feels even more powerful than before. She doesn't feel any pain at all anymore. Oh no, no, no. She is *nothing* but rage. This man made her lose her job, kidnapped her kids and attempts to kill her now? She can't think clearly. This is it... the **UPPER LIMIT**! She gives Brandon a powerful push and makes him fall over to the floor. She bends over and slowly walks towards him on all fours. Her eyes become glowing yellow and she furiously keeps staring him in the eye. She starts growling and even doesn't give in to the pain in her

mouth as her teeth become long and sharp again.

Brandon who now is genuinely afraid, helplessly crawls backwards, cowering and trying to escape from the vicious blue feline. But she grabs him by his suit's collar with her paws and roars in his face, finally letting out all the rage and frustration she felt because of him. Then, before Brandon can say another word, she makes him stare into her eyes. Brandon's worst nightmare comes true as he starts aging rapidly with his uncovered eye turning soullessly white. He is terrified and instantly regrets messing with this cat. But it's too late. Nicole drops him and he passes out. Richard stares in fear at all what just happened and wants to walk towards his wife, but she shakes her head. Nicole snarls and turns around, then jumps off the building onto the platform next to it and runs away further into the alley on all fours. She doesn't want to hurt Richard. She feels like her rage got way out of control now. This was the worst 'limit-push' incident she's ever had. Her head hurts and she tries to hide away around the corner of a wall for a while.

Richard is still standing on the spot where he saw his wife run away from him. He is more worried than ever, but is at least very glad that she survived. The cops, who shortly ago arrived, arrest Brandon for kidnapping and attempting murder. Brandon does not say a word, but instead gasps and shrieks as he now has become traumatized for life. The cops thank Richard and the kids for their help and leave, not knowing what Nicole did to Brandon. Richard looks behind his shoulder, again at the spot where Nicole left.]

Darwin: Where's Mrs. Mom?

Richard: [Sighs] I think she needs some time alone now, son.

[Gumball and Anais look at each other with worried expressions. The sky darkens and it starts raining heavily.]

Gumball: [Covers his head with his arms against the rain] Dad! Everything is getting soaking wet, shouldn't we get in the car?

Richard: No! I'm not leaving without your mother!

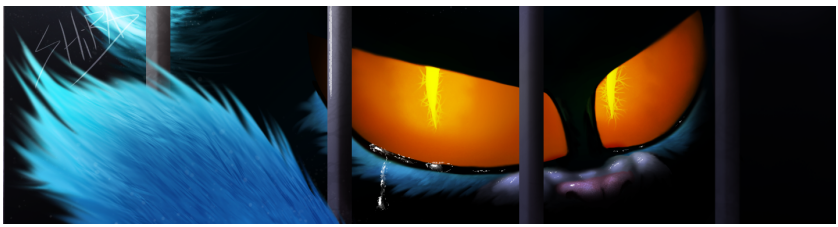
[Anais pokes her father on the shoulder and points at Darwin, who

is freezing due him only wearing shoes. Richard sighs.]

Richard: Alright. I guess we have to go.

[The four all get in the car and wait patiently for the rain to be over. The ambiance in the car is cold. No one says a word. Gumball tries to think of something to say, but doesn't manage to do so. The sky becomes even darker due it now being evening and the rainfall turns into a heavy thunderstorm. Anais, who is afraid of the thunder, cowers while hugging her adoptive brother who is sitting next to her tightly. Richard eventually considers to start the car, but hesitates when he hears a snapping sound coming from outside the car. He turns on the headlights, but it's no use due the alley being too dark. Suddenly a shadow rises up in front of the car and holds on onto the hood. Richard and the kids scream in terror as they didn't expect this.]

Chapter 12 - Therapy



[Richard and the kids cower from the terrifying shadow. It growls deeply, breathes heavily and the sound of scratching claws on the metal of the car can be heard. But a lightning strike reveals that it's only Nicole who was using the car to get up, as she is tired out and panting. Richard immediately gets out of the car when he recognises his wife and hugs her. Her shirt is ragged, her skirt is damaged and her fur is rough and soaking wet. But Richard doesn't care. His wife managed to get out of her meltdown by herself and he is glad she returned.]

Nicole: Richard, I... I'm so sorry if I scared you.

Richard: You didn't scare me, honey. I know you. And now I even know you better.

Nicole: Really?

Richard: This rage inside of you might get out of hand sometimes, but it's you. It's our flaws which make us unique and unfortunately there's almost never a cure for it. But you don't have to change for me, darling. It's what is in the heart that matters.

Nicole: But... you saw what I did... Am I not... dangerous?

Richard: Look, we're going to the therapist tomorrow to find a cure for your suffering. But for the whole rage thing? You'll have to accept who you are.

[Nicole, baffled by Richard's touching words, doesn't know what to say and smiles widely at him. He gives a smile back and hugs her.

He eventually holds Nicole's head and looks into her eyes, which have turned back to normal white again.]

Richard: Remember that... I love you.

Nicole: I love you too.

[Richard bends in and shares a passionate kiss with her. Despite the pouring rain and cold atmosphere, they both feel the warmth of their love. Nicole pushes Richard away a little and chuckles.]

Nicole: The kids are watching, dear.

Richard: Oh, eh... sorry.

[The two laugh and Richard gets into the car. Nicole opens the passenger door and smiles at her kids.]

Gumball: Are you okay, Mom?

Nicole: Don't worry, sweetie. I'm completely fine. Tomorrow I'll see if the therapist has a cure. But now, how about Joyful Burger?

[The kids and Richard are all relieved and cheer happily. Nicole smiles and gets into the other car, which she took earlier to drive here. The two cars drive off to the nearest Joyful Burger, where the family gathers again and has dinner. Nicole, who is glad Brandon got taken care of by the cops, feels way better and even can share some laughs with her family. It's something she hasn't felt in a long time. This is a family outing, which she loves to have. And it are moments like these that make her life worth living.]

Saturday 7.50PM

[Richard and Nicole patiently wait for their turn in the waiting room of the psychiatry. Nicole nervously waves her tail, but manages to stay calm thanks to Richard who holds her paw. After a while, which felt like hours, a figure comes around the corner. He is a young, tall raven-humanoid who wears a white blouse and denim pants. He says that it's Mrs. Watterson's turn and invites the couple into his office. They all enter and sit down.]

Therapist: Good evening, you both. My name is Erin Warrington, but please just call me Erin. I'll be your therapist and coach for emotions.

Nicole: Nice to meet you, sir.

Therapist: So, I've heard about some of the troubles you've been having when your husband called for the appointment. And if I'm correct, you've been dealing with extreme temper issues?

Nicole: Yes, which sometimes can get extremely out of control.

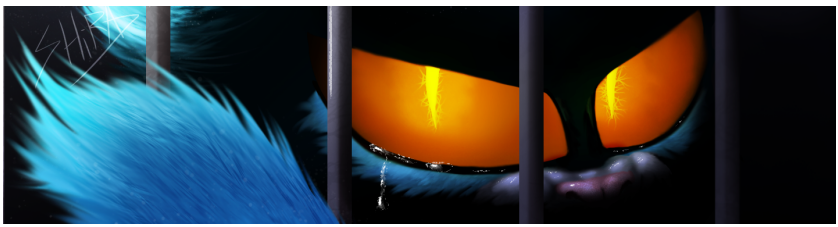
Therapist: I see... Well the first step to resolving these anger issues, is trying to go back in time and finding the possible cause of it. Mrs. Watterson, could you tell me about your past in relation with these issues?

[Nicole breathes deeply and starts telling all she remembers, trying to figure out where it came from...]

Nicole's POV

I remember having a long talk with the therapist that night. Nothing special happened, but it felt good to let it all out. I told my story and realised that it was part of me. I'm not a bad person. I'm not directly a monster. I am just suffering from mental problems. But everyone has their flaws, Richard taught me. So I decided to try accepting it. I got prescribed meditation and a breathing technique that could help me control my rage. From now on, I'd also try to count to ten and remember all the good things about my family before potentially snapping. But even though I still could be feisty, I could yell or I could hiss... this is me. This is who I am. And right now, I'm actually proud to say that. But a part of me was still afraid... I only feared it could get more out of control than it already was...

Chapter 13 - A starry night



General POV

Saturday 9.10PM

[Richard and Nicole are on their way back from the psychiatrist. Nicole stares out of the window with a grieving expression while she sits in the passenger seat. She silently glares at the other cars passing by and blinks slowly while rain flows down the window. Her mind is a mess as she remembers everything that happened. It should be alright now, shouldn't it?, she thinks. But something doesn't feel right. However, she is too tired to think too much about it. A streetlight shines on her claws and she turns her head to look at them. They are unsheathed. But why? Nicole sighs and doesn't know what to do. Richard tries his best to stay focused on the road in front of him, but gets a little distracted when he sees his wife feeling down like that. After passing the traffic lights, he slows down and stops the car at the side of the road. The streets are quiet here, so it's alright, he thinks. Nicole notices that Richard stopped the car and turns to him.]

Nicole: Honey? Why did you stop?

Richard: Dear, are you sure that you're feeling alright?

[He tilts his head and looks at her with a worried expression.]

Nicole: I... I am fine.

Richard: Than why the sad face?

Nicole: ...I'm just tired, that's all.

[Richard doesn't know if his wife is lying or not, but refuses to get into an argument with her. So he nods and continues driving the car, heading home.

After entering the house, Nicole prepares a cup of tea with lots of calming herbals in it. She sits down on the couch and covers herself with a blanket. She shivers and feels herself getting really worried. Richard notices this and joins her on the couch after putting the car keys on the table.]

Richard: Oh poor you, honey.

[He leans over and gives his wife a kiss on the cheek.]

Nicole: I- I'm fine... I just need to calm down right now.

[Richard looks at her cup as soon as he smells the herbals.]

Richard: A herbal tea? But why so strong?

[Nicole looks him in the eye. Richard notices the bags under her eyes, indicating that she's exhausted and he starts to get a bit nervous.]

Nicole: I just don't want another incident to happen, okay? It's time that I sedate myself.

Richard: What? But dear, Brandon got taken care of by the police and you'll be able to apply for a new job soon! I don't think it's necessary to take precautions like this.

Nicole: I know... but something doesn't feel right...

Richard: What is it that makes you think that?

Nicole: I just feel it... and-

[Nicole's eyes start tearing up and Richard comes closer to take her on his lap when he notices her watery eyes.]

Nicole: ...I'm still scared, Richard. Something snapped inside of me when I attacked Brandon yesterday.

[Nicole still shivers as she drinks up her tea and Richard watches her in deep concern. Nicole lowers her ears and looks at her paws in terror, afraid that her body would bring monstrosity up again. Richard gently holds her head with his paws and once more looks her in the eye.]

Richard: What about you get some sleep now. It's gonna be fine, honey, just take a good rest and you'll feel way better tomorrow.

[Nicole sighs and nods. She hugs Richard quickly and disappears into the bedroom. Richard looks around for a short while. He is worried about his wife as much as he fears her. But he actually feels guilty for being scared. He eventually refuses to think too much about it and decides to go to bed too, after giving the kids a goodnight kiss. When he gets into the bed, he checks on his wife. She doesn't move much, so she should be asleep, Richard thinks and he dwells off. Nicole has her eyes wide open, indicating that Richard was wrong. She can't sleep. For some reason she feels really energized, but in a bad way. While her head begs for rest by hurting, her body is tensed and loaded up. She tries to relax, but doesn't manage to as her headache only gets worse. What is happening to me?, she thinks, what have I become...

Nicole sees the minutes passing by on the clock. She still can't sleep. Her body is in shock from all the events and her head still hurts. She grunts while turning around and sees Richard who is in deep slumber. She sighs and moves closer to him, wrapping her arms around his body. She rubs her head against his fluffy cheek and purrs. But he doesn't seem to wake up. She eventually tries to fall asleep by closing her eyes, but her hurting head keeps her awake. Her left eye twitches and she starts having enough of her body's acting. She grabs her tail and starts biting on its tip, out of frustration. Richard felt that she moved her arms and wakes up. He sees his wife curled up with her tail in between her jaws and she freezes when she catches him looking at her.]

Nicole: [With an awkward smile] Eh... Hey, honey... Sorry that I woke you up.

Richard: [Yawns] It's okay, don't worry. Is anything wrong though?

[Nicole releases her tail and sits up straight.]

Nicole: I... I can't sleep.

Richard: Oh... Well, do you know the cause?

Nicole: [Pinches the area in between her eyebrows] My head hurts so bad...

[Richard nods and looks at the clock.]

Richard: 12am... It's not that late. Would you like to catch some fresh air? I'm not that tired anyways.

Nicole: Sure, I think that'll do good.

[Nicole smiles at her husband who gives her a kiss on her forehead. The couple dress themselves and lock the door as they leave the house. Nicole raises her head and sniffs. She smells the trees nearby and feels a chilly breeze blowing through her fur. She never felt that good to be outside before. Richard starts the engine and his wife joins him in the car.]

Richard: I might know a beautiful place to go. It's a forest nearby which has hills to watch the stars on.

Nicole: Sounds amazing, dear. Let's go there!

[Richard is happy that Nicole is happy. It's been a while since he had seen her calm like that. He drives the car to the forest he mentioned and parks after they arrived. The sky is clear and lots of stars are visible. Richard lays down on the grassy hill and Nicole joins him. She crawls closer to him and rests her head on his shoulder. Richard wraps his arm around her and gently caresses the fur in between her ears. She rubs her head and smiles, her eyes lovingly meeting Richard's. Richard sees the stars being reflected in her eyes. Her pupils are big, indicating that she actually feels happy. The couple don't say anything, but their eyes speak thousands of words. This is the love Nicole needed and missed. She yawns, eventually getting tired, and closes her eyes while Richard

hugs her...

Nicole slowly wakes up by the passing streetlights which shine in her eyes. It's still night time and she realizes she's in the backseat of the car with a blanket wrapped around her. Richard, who is driving, looks at her in the car mirror.]

Richard: Goodnight, honey. [Chuckles] Sorry, I didn't want to wake you up.

Nicole: [Shakes her head] It's fine, dear.

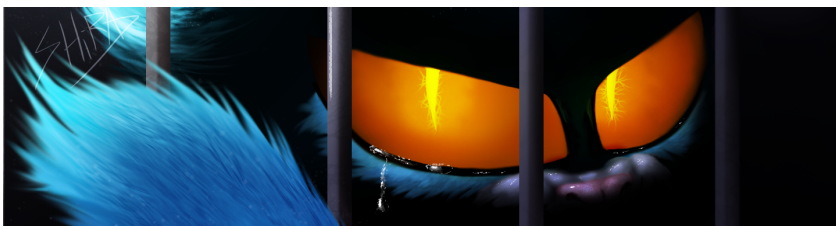
[Nicole sits up straight and looks outside, only to see that they arrived back home. She and Richard make their way into the house and change back into their pyjamas.]

Nicole: Thanks so much for this wonderful night, honey.

Richard: Anytime.

[Nicole kisses him on the cheek and they both fall asleep. Nicole is glad she found some rest again.]

Chapter 14 - Suspense and illegal electronics



[It's three months later when Nicole managed to get a new job. At the moment, she works in the marketing sector at a starting business called 'Sca-BI'; named after the owners Scarlett and Bernard Isselton. It's a stable job and manageable for Nicole. But even though it can get stressful by all the deadlines, Nicole actually has fun doing her job. She is the one responsible for the company's promotion. All other employees are nice to her, but one caught her attention. It's a white dog-humanoid who wears a black suit and high heels. Nicole figured out that her name is Kayla and is quite a silent one. But some weeks after Nicole joined Sca-BI, she notices that Kayla was kind of luring at her. Nicole also recognizes the black suit from somewhere...]

Tuesday 11.00PM – Elmore jail

[Brandon sits on the prison bed, nervously tapping the notebook on his lap with his fingers. He sees himself in the mirror; his hair went back to normal and his blind eye doesn't hurt anymore, but he hasn't stopped hating the blue feline. Oh, he sure is terrified of her, but his lust for revenge is still strong. He wants to make her pay, pay even more than last time. He regrets not immediately letting her go when he was standing on that building. Instead, we got to see the terrific monster that had been hiding behind that mask all along, he thinks.

His cell is full of sketches and building plans, a picture of Nicole hangs on the wall with a knife pierced through it and last, but not

least, boxes with all sorts of electronic parts are under his bed. All these months he had been in prison so far, he spent his time building a machine. He secretly received all the parts from members of his gang who weren't arrested. This machine could help Brandon with his revenge plan on distance, as he has to stay in jail for another month. Thanks to good behaviour and mental scars, his jail time got shortened. Brandon suddenly hears the rattling noise of the room's door opening, as a guard lets someone in.]

Officer: You have a visitor.

[As soon as the officer opened the cell door and waits outside, the guest makes her way in and sits down on the chair next to Brandon's bed.]

Brandon: Do you have the final piece?

[The guest smirks and hands him a small cardboard box with lots of stamps on it.]

Unknown: It's a very rare one, so we had to order it online. Unfortunately, the shipping was more expensive than we expected, so they had to add more stamps.

Brandon: It's almost all complete now... Thank you and you can leave, *Kayla*.

Kayla: Of course, *boss.*

[Kayla leaves the cell and the officer locks it again. Fortunately for him, no cops have found out about Brandon's plan yet... Brandon sits down at the tiny desk and starts assembling the small piece to his machine.]

Wednesday 6.00PM

[Nicole enters the house after arriving home from work. She puts her purse on the couch and gets surprised when she sees Richard at the dinner table with the kids, instead of watching television in the living room. The four are watching something on Gumball's laptop. When they see that Nicole arrived, they pause the video to greet her.]

Gumball: Hey Mom! How was work?

Nicole: It was great actually, thank you! What are you guys doing?

Darwin: Data about the secret department of an Asian laboratory has been leaked and we got to know that they recently created a new invention.

Anais: It's such a mind-blowing gadget, that even Dad is interested in its information.

Nicole: Ooh, that sounds pretty neat. What exactly is it?

[Nicole joins her family at the table by sitting down and Anais turns the laptop to her mother, so she can see.]

Anais: It's a small core for mechanical devices that make their commands more advanced and efficient. It has also been used earlier to create sedating weapons to contain wild animals.

Gumball: They made guns that fired some kind of 'obey-serum'! But they were too dangerous and got destroyed.

Anais: But now they're reusing the concept of its core for, like I said, increasing machine efficiency. A problem is though, that this core can possibly get sabotaged by people who know about it.

Nicole: What happens then?

Anais: If a C.U.B.-core, like how they're called, gets sabotaged, a very dangerous weapon can be created. It'll have the power to attach to one specific victim, exposing them to heavy sound waves which make sensitive predators go insane. After one encounter with the sabotaged core, the victim gets 'infected' with it. That means the core won't even have to be around the victim anymore. Attaching usually happens by putting a hair inside it.

[Nicole is baffled by all the information.]

Anais: But don't worry, Mom. That's just some shady stuff I read online about it. I'm sure no one knows about sabotaging it. Overall, it's an amazing step for the modern technology.

Nicole: It indeed sounds really cool. Even though it can be dangerous... But that's in Asia, right?

Anais: Yeah. They're only available online, but then on those illegal, dark websites which even I don't dare to visit.

Nicole: Very well. Now how about we fix ourselves some dinner before it gets too late? [Chuckles]

Richard: [Laughs] Fair point, honey.

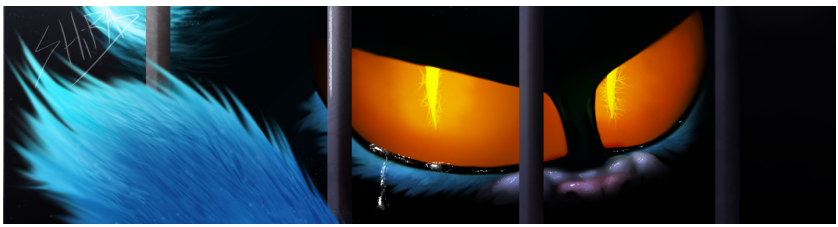
[After the Wattersons finished dinner, Nicole is packing her stuff for work tomorrow. As she has a presentation in a few days, she packs another bag with writing tools and paper. But she realizes she doesn't have any big paper sheets laying around and decides to go buy some. She grabs the car keys and her wallet and makes her way to the door. Gumball and Darwin are upstairs, Anais is reading a book on the couch and Richard is grabbing something from the fridge.]

Nicole: Hey guys, I forgot to buy presentation papers on my way home today, so I'll be off to the store for a while.

Richard: [Yells from the kitchen] That's okay, honey! See you later!

[Nicole and Anais wave at each other for a brief second and Nicole leaves the house. She starts the car and makes her way to the office supply store. The nearest one is next to Elmore's west border, so Nicole had to drive on the highways for a while. But she doesn't mind, she knows the track. Even though she hopes to get home before it gets dark...]

Chapter 15 - Sounds of agony



[Kayla visits Brandon another time and is standing in the cell door opening, waiting for the officer to give them some privacy. Brandon reveals his machine; a shiny, silver robot which was roughly built, but strong.]

Brandon: Beautiful, isn't it?

Kayla: [Smirks] Well done, boss.

Brandon: Do you have the *key* of this plan?

[Kayla hands him a small transparent container with a blue hair inside it.]

Kayla: I got it off her chair yesterday, so it should be fresh. Cats also lose hair a lot, ugh.

Brandon: That's why I'm a dog person.

[Brandon puts the hair into the device's core and attaches it to the robot.]

Brandon: There, it's all complete now. Oh, could you do one last thing for me, Kayla?

Kayla: Sure, what?

Brandon: Take this little robot with you and release it at the nearest highway. If my calculations are correct, it should be able to track *her* within minutes.

Kayla: Alright, no problem.

[Kayla picks up the robot and hides it in her jacket, which she just took off. The two nod at each other and Kayla leaves. Brandon looks one more time at his building plans and smiles. There's no way his plan could fail. Prepare to suffer, Watterson, he thinks. He grabs two pictures from his research board and looks at them while sitting on his chair. Two cougars are seen on the pictures, which are going through the worst agony because of the sound waves. Well, I guess there's enough frequency in this for a bigger, feistier cat, he thinks and chuckles...

It's night-time when Nicole is on her way home. A traffic jam caused her leaving the store later than expected and she drives towards the gas station to fill up the car. The streets are empty and a fog keeps the atmosphere cool. It's a little freaky, she thinks, but it's fine. The gas station is neglected and the only sound comes from the pumps. Nicole fills the gas tank like how she usually does and slides the card through to pay. She wants to get back into the car, but her attention immediately goes to the forest next to the gas station as she hears a stick snapping. She twitches her ears and narrows her eyes.

The forest seems endless and it's deep and dark. Nicole doesn't want any trouble, so tries her best to ignore it. But another snapping sound eventually makes her walk into the direction of the forest. She locks the car and takes a footstep into the dark shadows of the trees. She feels rather odd and doesn't know why she is so attracted to the sound. Her curiosity is stronger than her fear and she proceeds walking into the forest. It's all quiet now... The wind blows through the leaves of the trees and the only light comes from the full moon which is high up the sky. Suddenly, the snapping sound gets louder and closer until a shadow appears close to Nicole. She stares at it in confusion, but keeps standing still.

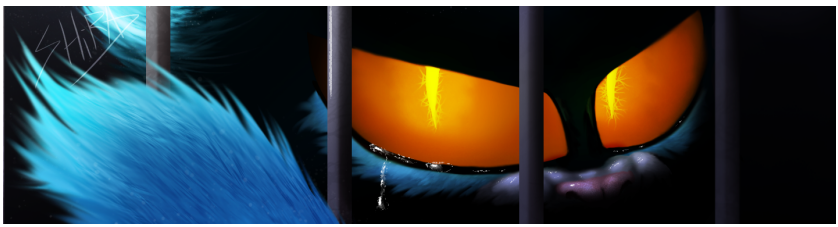
The shadow reveals itself in the moonlight and Nicole can see that it's a small, shiny robot which carries some type of device in its core. Nicole bends forward to examine the artificial creature and sees some initials carved in the core. She sniffs her nose and smells something that makes her gasp. Laundry... Fabric... No, a suit! A known suit!

Nicole's eyes widen as she recognizes the smell without a doubt. Brandon. Before she can even run away, the robot shuffles its parts and the device appears on top of it. A green light shines up and suddenly a very high, screeching tone starts to play. It's too high for a human being to hear, but Nicole goes through the worst hearing agony. She has so many questions, but her head starts to hurt too bad. She immediately remembers the sound waves Anais was talking about... The sound drills deeply into her hearing sense and makes her body shiver. Not again!, she thinks. The sound suddenly stops after some minutes which felt like hours for Nicole. She falls down on her knees on the rough forest ground while tightly covering her ears with her paws. The pain makes her angry... It's making her insane!

Nicole can't help bending down into a crawling position as her worst nightmare unfolds itself. Her body starts to tremble more and her fur rises. Her heart starts beating faster as all muscles jerk a bit due all the tension. She helplessly tries to calm herself down by taking deep breaths. She doesn't want this to happen again! Unfortunately it does, as her claws unsheathe and her eyes change to a monstrous yellow. The pain in her mouth feels even worse than the first time she experienced it and grunts while her teeth elongate and the burning feeling in her gums returns. She starts panting quickly and yells when her back starts to crackle a bit. Her muscles cramp so heavily, that she yells again out of pain. Her shirt rips, exposing the wild, upright fur on her back.

She grunts as she holds her back with her paws. Terrifying crackling sounds come from her back as she tries to stand up straight. She once again yells, and her voice lowers its pitch until nothing more is left than growling and roaring. Defeated by pain, Nicole lets herself fall on the ground, in between the leaves. She realizes Brandon still wants her to suffer. He is making her more insane than before... He slowly turns her into the monster who he expected at first. Nicole can't take it anymore and, despite the intense pain, she lifts her head and roars loudly into the air which sounds like a; 'WHYYYYYYYYYY!!'. It echoes in the darkness...]

Chapter 16 - Sickness



12.00AM

[The kids are asleep while Richard is starting to stress out. His wife didn't return yet and it's only getting later. He nervously tries to call her several times, but gets no answer... He eventually decides to go find her and drives to the office supply store in cartax.

Nicole's phone lies in between the leaves on the ground and vibrated a few times when Richard tried to call her. Nicole passed out after she felt another heavy crack in her back. She suddenly regains strength to get up and awakes. She gets back up on her hind legs and grabs her phone from the ground. She feels a bit better, but her body keeps trembling like before. She gasps when she sees Richard's missed calls and immediately calls him back. Richard picks up and turns on hands-free as he is on his way.]

Richard: Honey? Are you alright?

Nicole: Yes, hey honey. I'm fine now. Just making my way back to the car.

Richard: [Sighs deeply in relief] Thank gosh. What happened?

Nicole: I... I'm not sure. It might be because I'm tired, but I thought to have encountered one of those C.U.B-things our daughter was talking about.

Richard: A C.U.B.-core? Oh jeez! Maybe Anais knows more.

Nicole: We'll see tomorrow... Ugh, I'm too tired to think.

Richard: Will you be fine, driving home?

Nicole: Yeah, no worries. I'll be okay.

Richard: Okay, just call whenever something's up, alright?

Nicole: I promise. See you in a moment, honey.

Richard: Cya.

[Nicole hangs up on Richard and stares at her phone screen for a while... A C.U.B.-core... How could anyone has gotten their hands on it... And why did I smell... Brandon!, she thinks. But she doubts if he put her through this... He is in jail and can't go anywhere... Nicole has too many questions, but decides to go home before it gets too late.

Nicole is laying in bed with Richard, who fell asleep. Again, she is still awake. She feels... different... She doesn't understand, as she was very tired earlier, why she feels so energized at the moment. She eventually decides to read a book, but it didn't help, as she falls asleep at 4AM...

Nicole feels exhausted and angry the next morning. She is so done with her body! Why can't she have one more peaceful night?...]

[The scene cuts to when Nicole is having a break at work. She holds her sandwich with both paws but hesitates eating. She doesn't feel any appetite at the moment. As if, her body blocks her from eating. A headache spikes up and she starts to feel more and more dizzy throughout the rest of her shift. Before going home, she stops at the exit and holds her head. Kayla walks across and notices.]

Kayla: [Faking her concern] Gosh, Nicole, are you okay?

Nicole: I... I'm fine... My head hurts, that's all.

Kayla: Would you like a glass of water or something?

Nicole: No, thanks. I'll take in my medicine when I get home...

Kayla: All right then...

[Kayla and Nicole nod and Nicole makes her way home. Kayla immediately calls Brandon after Nicole left.]

Brandon: Got any news?

Kayla: Sure do. It seems like she's experiencing exhaustion and more headaches.

Brandon: Hmm, it's not as bad as I imagined so far.

Kayla: What are you gonna do about it?

Brandon: Don't worry, if Nicole successfully got in contact with the C.U.B.-core, she'll experience worse pain soon...

[Nicole feels like throwing up when she arrives home. She walks a little limply while getting some aspirins from the cupboard. She downs one with water, but her body refuses to take it and she spits the water with the pill out in the sink. Her dizziness gets worse... What is going on..., she thinks. To prevent herself from actually collapsing, she holds onto the sink with her paws and takes deep breaths. Richard comes downstairs in the meantime and hugs his wife from behind.]

Richard: Hey, honey. How was work?

Nicole: [Sighs while her head is still above the sink] I... I feel sick...

Richard: Sick? You? What have you done to my wife? [Chuckles]

Nicole: I'm being serious, Richard... My body literally made me throw up my medicine.

Richard: [Concerned] Oh gosh! Should we call a doctor or something?

Nicole: No... It's okay. Maybe the consequences of short nights are catching up with me...

[Richard turns his wife around and looks at her. She has dark bags under her eyes, her pupils are restlessly constricted and her fur is a little bleak. He also feels her shivering and that she's warmer than

normal.]

Richard: Could you've caught the flu?

Nicole: I don't think the flu has symptoms of total insanity...

Richard: What do you mean?

Nicole: My mind... is so blurry. I get these weird urges and it makes me crazy...

[Nicole and Richard stare at each other in silence for a while. Then Richard carries his wife to bed without saying a word. He tucks her in and sits down on the bed to caress her fur. She tries to keep her eyes opened while sweat runs down her head.]

Richard: What would you fancy for dinner?

Nicole: I'm not really hungry, but thanks.

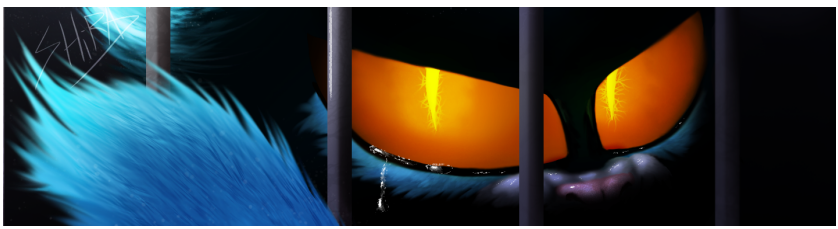
Richard: Are you sure?

Nicole: However, my body doesn't allow me to eat at all at the moment, so...

Richard: Just remember to call me if you need something...

[Nicole smiles and her husband kisses her on the cheek. She closes her eyes and finally dwells off...]

Chapter 17 - Once a predator, always a predator



[The next few weeks have been quite peaceful. Nicole recovered a little bit and the Watterson family could live their life like they usually do... Until Brandon gets released from jail. His sentence is over and he rejoins his gang while explaining his full plan to them. Kayla feels like Brandon's plan is slowly turning into a bad idea, but she stays silent. She doesn't want to lose her opportunity to earn money.... Brandon puts some printed graphs on the table to show his gang members.]

Brandon: See this peak? This is the predicted moment that the C.U.B.'s infection is fully gonna kick in.

Kayla: What's gonna happen?

Brandon: Whole Elmore will get to know this kitty's secret...

[The scene cuts to 11PM on a Friday evening. Anais is asleep, the brothers are watching a movie and Richard eats some ice cream in the kitchen. Nicole is about to go to sleep due her still feeling a bit weak. The last weeks might've been quiet, but still a struggle for her. Her body could barely manage any food and she'd been feeling dizzy a lot. Now she is sitting in bed, reading a book. Even though she is used to being alone in rooms, it freaks her out a little this time. She continues reading, ignoring the odd breeze that makes her fur rise up. Come on, Nicole, don't give in..., she thinks. After some obnoxious minutes, she suddenly hears something. As her head starts aching again, she decides to catch some fresh air. She quickly

changes into one of her work uniforms and grabs the keys. As she leaves the room, Richard just comes in, going to bed. She explains that she's going for a short walk and they kiss each other goodnight. Nicole glares into the living room, making sure Gumball and Darwin went to bed too. She then goes outside and locks the door behind her. She feels great to be outside at night again, just like that evening when Richard took her to the hills. She walks across a few blocks until she sees a known house: Kayla's. Nicole comes closer out of pure curiosity when she sees that Kayla's car isn't parked in front of the porch like it usually is. Where could she possibly be at this time?, Nicole thinks.

In the meantime, Kayla is on her way home, returning from Brandon's meeting. The C.U.B.-core is in a plastic bag on the passenger seat next to her. She glares at it for a second and once again starts to doubt whether Brandon's plan is a good idea or not. Something doesn't feel right... She calls her husband when she gets near home, asking him to check on the fish tank, as he usually forgets. Her husband pretends that he didn't forget it and says that he'll feed the fish in a minute. Kayla sighs and hangs up. He better doesn't forget again, she thinks.

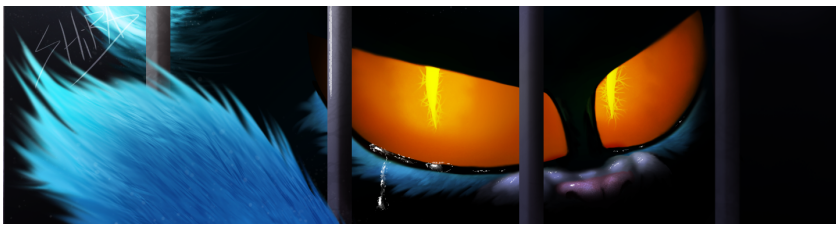
As Kayla is getting closer to her home, with the C.U.B.-core, Nicole starts to feel sick again. The very high screeching sound returns as it plays inside of Nicole's head. She almost falls over because of her dizziness and grabs hold onto a wall of the house with her right paw. She pinches the area in between her eyebrows with the other and grunts out of pain and frustration. Nicole knows that it's gonna happen again and lowers her ears in defeat. She lets herself fall on her knees and whispers while begging her body for mercy. But it's no use. The pain is just as horrible as all other times and Nicole loses it. She screams while tears roll down her cheeks. A harsh crack in her back eventually makes her tumble over and she accidentally breaks a window with her claws. She loses her balance and falls through the window, landing on some glass shards on the hard concrete floor. Nicole yelps and quickly rises up, to pull the glass out of her back. Some blood stains her shirt and she can't take it anymore. She wildly shakes her head until the transformation is once again complete. Some shreds of her clothing hit the floor and she gets on all fours. After staring angrily at the broken glass which

stabbed her back, her attention suddenly goes to the large fish tank in the corner of the room. The room is dark and the only light comes from the tank. Nicole gets closer to it and rests her clawed paws on the glass. It's full of big, colourful fishes. Her yellow, glowing pupils follow the movement of the biggest one. She can see the bright, pink scales reflecting the tank's light and the small fins moving quickly. She doesn't know what starts going through her as she loses control over her mind. Her heart starts beating faster and she automatically lowers her upper body while preparing to pounce...

In the meantime, Jay, Kayla's husband, heard the window breaking and gets up to go checking it. He freezes in his steps when he hears a lot of splashing and another breaking glass sound. He grabs a baseball bat and puts his paw on the knob of the room's door. While shivering in fear, he carefully opens it while tightly holding the bat. His eyes widen at what he sees; the fish tank's glass broke in pieces, water from the tank wets the floor and all fish disappeared.

But most shocking of all, Jay sees Nicole viciously tearing the last fish apart. She rips pieces out of its flesh with her teeth and quickly swallows them. She can't help it... All those days her body made her gag by most of the food and she was genuinely starving. After finishing the remains of the fish, she turns her head and her eyes meet Jay's. Jay screams in terror when he sees the monstrous feline staring back at him. She twitches her ears and growls furiously at him. Jay, who spent a fortune of those rare fish, angrily sprints towards her while raising the bat with his arm. He manages to hit her hard on the head, but in doing so, commits a huge mistake. Nicole hisses out of pain, but doesn't give in at all. She has gotten used to more painful situations. So she pounces on the brown dog-humanoid and pins him down. She disarms him by grabbing his bat with her teeth and throws it across the room. The feline's claws dig into the dog's arms and he yells it out in agony.]

Chapter 18 - Murder



[This is not Nicole anymore... She doesn't know what she's doing and feels nothing but rage. Jay tries to release himself by biting her in her wrist, but she bites him back in response. His little teeth are no match against her elongated, sharp fangs which pierce through his throat like knives and she powerfully closes her jaws. Jay screams one more time, until a heavy crack is heard. His spine twisted itself out of the pain in his throat and Nicole jumps off him when she doesn't feel his pulse anymore. She pants quickly while drool and blood drip from her mouth. She suddenly regains a bit of her normal senses while the C.U.B.'s sound fades away and gasps when she sees what she has done. She ate this poor man's fish AND murdered him? She starts to feel dizzy and sick again. She can't handle this... The metallic taste of blood in her mouth makes her gag and she gets on her hind legs again. She tries her best to wipe the blood away and doesn't know what to do. She starts crying helplessly and scratches her own arms open with her claws as a punishment. No one hates her more than she hates herself at the moment. She crossed the biggest line ever... Now she knows it for sure. They all were always right, Richard was totally wrong; she is nothing more than a murdering monster! Ashamed and afraid that someone would see her, she climbs out of the window and runs home, not knowing she left some shreds of her clothing behind...]

[It's 1AM when Kayla arrives home. She grabs the bag with the C.U.B.-core and gets out of the car. She unlocks the front door and gets surprised when she doesn't see her husband in the living room, where he usually is. A metallic smell catches her attention and she gets closer to the door where the fish tank was. Her stomach ties into a knot as she fears the worst and opens the door. She covers

her mouth with her paws and gags before screaming in terror. Her dead husband is laying on the floor with blood all around him and giant bite marks on his throat. It's a total disaster and Kayla almost passes out...

Nicole rushes into the Watterson house. She closes the door and leans with her back against it while panting heavily. Her eyes turn normal white again, but her pupils are still restlessly constricted. She feels utterly horrible... She actually did it... She killed a man. She *murdered* someone. Her head hurts and she decides to take a shower to wash the blood off her fur. No matter how illegal or psychotic she has been, she wants to keep it a secret... After some moments, she gets into the shower and feels the water rinsing the dirt and blood off her. Her back recovered from the glass shards, but the water turns red by Jay's blood. She freezes and stares at her claws for a while. They are like shiny, long daggers at the end of her fingers. She sighs deeply and closes her eyes, retracting her claws again and turns off the water. After drying herself and putting on her pyjamas, she stares at herself in the mirror. She is used to her fur being fluffy after washing it, but her still elongated, sharp teeth give her a beasty look. She inspects herself from top to toe, making sure all blood is gone. She then turns off the light and goes into her and Richard's bedroom. She silently sneaks across her dwelled off husband and gets in bed. She closes her eyes and falls asleep. She never felt more exhausted before...]

Saturday 9.00AM

[Kayla angrily slams her fists on the table. Brandon's gang is having another meeting and Kayla surprises them with the news about Nicole.]

Kayla: Yes! Murder! That's what I said! She *killed* my darn husband!

[Brandon tilts his head in slight confusion and Kayla drops a bag on the table. She pulls out some pieces of Nicole's clothing which are soaked with blood. Brandon gasps and then chuckles mischievously.]

Kayla: You think this is funny?!

Brandon: Heh, I wanted this kitty to go berserk, but it wasn't my intention to get your husband killed...

Kayla: I knew this plan was a bad idea! I'm sorry but I'm sick of this! I don't want to end up in between those teeth too...

Brandon: Oh come on, Kayla. You're one of the best members here, we need you.

Kayla: I... I don't know... What are you gonna do? Make this monster even more insane?

Brandon: Kayla... If you stay with us, you'll have the ultimate opportunity to take revenge on her.

[Kayla freezes and stares blankly for a second. Tears form in her eyes and she furiously narrows them. She clenches her paws into fists.]

Kayla: Fine. She's gonna pay for this!

Brandon: Now that's the spirit!

Kayla: So, what's next...?

[The scene cuts to 12PM when the Watterson kids are playing outside and the parents are having coffee at the dining table. Nicole almost hasn't said a single word and is scared that Richard might know something. But Richard is just eating a bagel with his coffee like he usually does, not suspecting anything. Nicole sighs and gets up to put her cup in the kitchen sink. Nicole's phone, which is on the living room table, suddenly rings.]

Richard: Honey? Someone is trying to call you!

[Nicole dries her paws after washing them and rushes into the living room. She grabs her phone and quickly gets into the bedroom.]

Nicole: Thanks, honey! [Closes the door]

[Nicole stares at her screen, which shows an unknown number...

She picks it up while sweating a bit.]

Nicole: Hello?

Kayla: Nicole! I know you're there!

[Nicole's heart sinks and her ears lower themselves.]

Nicole: Kayla?!

Kayla: Yes, and stop pretending that you're innocent!

Nicole: I- I didn't expect your call... I- I'm so sorry about what happened. [Starts sobbing]

Kayla: Curse you, Nicole! I can't believe I had to *call you* in order to get an apology!

Nicole: I- I'm such a mess... I really have deep regrets!

Kayla: Your regrets ain't gonna bring my husband back to life! You ruined me! Psychotic monster! Why in the world would you go this far?!

Nicole: L-Listen... I know you're extremely upset... I know I went way too far... But I d-didn't kill him on purpose.

Kayla: So what?! It was an *accident*?

Nicole: You don't understand! Something weird is happening to me and I don't know what!

Kayla: I do.

Nicole: W-what?!

Kayla: *You* are infected by a sabotaged C.U.B.-core.

Nicole: [Gasps] I already was fearing that! B-but, how do you know?

Kayla: [Sarcastically] One of Brandon's brilliant plans.

Nicole: Him? I knew it! He was messing with me all this time! But... how? I thought he was-

Kayla: In jail? Yes. But he has people working for him, idiot.

Nicole: What! You?!

Kayla: Shut it. It's my only way of a balanced income.

Nicole: That bastard *pays you* to destroy me?!

Kayla: That's not one of your major concerns now, cat.

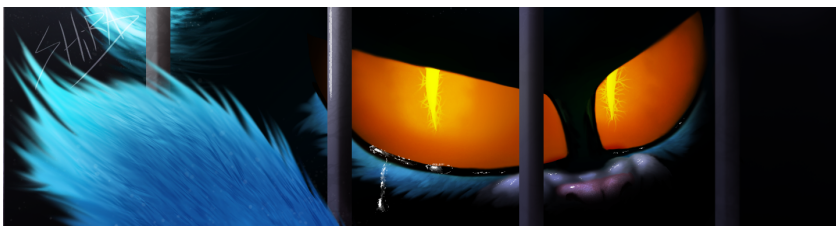
Nicole: What do you mean?

[The phone call gets interrupted by a loud knocking sound at the front door. Richard opens it and five animal control officers burst inside. Richard doesn't even have the time to ask.]

Kayla: Farewell. This is the fate monsters like you deserve...

[Nicole gasps and Kayla hangs up on her...]

Chapter 19 - More animal than citizen



[Before Nicole can do anything, the animal control officers burst through the bedroom door. Nicole feels that something is getting triggered inside her. She jumps towards the opposite wall of the room and gets cornered by the officers. They violently chain her up and one of them locks her jaws in a muzzle. She angrily tries to release herself, but the five men are too strong for her at the moment.]

Richard: Honey! What is happening?!

Nicole: I- I don't know!

[One of the officers steps towards Richard and Nicole hears a muffled conversation of him explaining to Richard and informing him about the murder. Richard stands still while the officer returns to Nicole. He silently stares at his wife, terrified and with tears in his eyes. Nicole looks him in the eye and feels even more horrible... She let him down... She only got him into trouble... Anger rises, while her claws unsheathe. She snarls and violently digs deep slits into the arm of one of the officers. As consequence, plastic covers get pulled over her claws and she powerlessly lets herself fall onto her knees. This is it... The moment she feared most... She never thought that it would come to this... What is gonna happen to her?

The officers take Nicole with them and as she walks past Richard, they look each other in the eye another time. Nicole, all chained up and treated like a wild animal, gets tears in her eyes. But Richard

can't take it anymore, as he looks away. He closes the front door without saying anything after the officers locked Nicole up in a cage. The van which the cage is inside of starts moving and Nicole watches the house getting further away from her as she holds the metal bars with her paws.

Trauma, tears, fear and shock are the only things the kids feel when Richard told them about what happened. They sure are terrified, but are all in agreement that it wasn't Nicole's fault. Anais grabs a printed article and reads it with an angry frown. It all was brought to this extreme level by that sabotaged C.U.B.-core. While Richard and the brothers sob in fear and grief, Anais bravely starts a research about the corrupted device. She quickly types on her laptop, full of courage and will to save her mother...]

[Nicole wakes up after she passed out during the van trip. She looks around and realizes she's inside a dark cell, separated from other cells which are at the end of the corridor. She tries moving around, but her neck is chained to the wall. Not again, she thinks. Sharp edges of the muzzle stab her cheeks, as it's wrapped around her jaws way too tightly. But her limbs are fortunately free. She then sees the paperwork in front of her; a newspaper with her murder on the headline, a pink slip that indicates she's once again fired from her job and a tag. She carefully walks closer, avoiding getting choked by the ironwork and inspects the tag. Her eyes widen when she reads it. She's officially been classified more animal than citizen of Elmore. Did Elmore lose their mind? Was it because she ate someone's pet fishes? Everyone knows now..., she restlessly thinks. I... have become a beast... She suddenly hears the sound of a heavy door closing and Brandon appears in front of her cell with Kayla by his side. Nicole angrily rips off her Sca-BI-badge and breaks it with her bare paws.]

Brandon: Well, well, well. Look who we got here.

[Nicole's ears lower and she furiously bares her teeth.]

Brandon: I see my plan worked brilliantly.

[He hands over a stack of money to Kayla and she immediately packs it away. Brandon gets closer to the cell bars and Nicole tries

to charge for him, but gets stopped by the chain around her neck. She curls her paws around the bars instead while angrily staring him in the eye, growling viciously.]

Nicole: You... You did this to me! What did I expect?!

Brandon: How does it feel to be locked up, huh?!

Nicole: You deserved it, because you tried to kill me, bastard!

Brandon: Well, you've actually killed someone, didn't you! Someone completely innocent!

[Brandon points at Kayla, who tries to hide her tears. He then gets closer until his and Nicole's faces are only a few inches away from each other.]

Brandon: You're gonna stay here with all other nasty beasts, where you belong.

[Nicole tries to bite him, but still can't get any closer by the chain. Brandon pulls a small bag out of his pocket and reveals the C.U.B.-core. Nicole gasps and she hears the high sound again. She covers her ears with her paws and falls to the floor while her body starts to tremble again.]

Brandon: I'm gonna break you, Watterson. But this time for real.

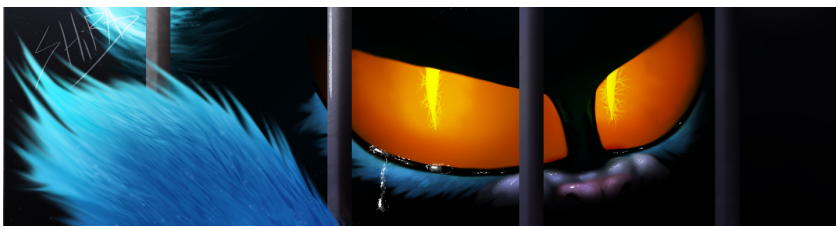
[Brandon ties the C.U.B.-core to one of the cell bars and pushes a button that makes the ceiling open up, only to reveal a big arena filled with cheering criminals. They all are on the run from the police and have this abandoned place as their hiding spot. A platform underneath Nicole's cell starts rising up, bringing her to the middle of the arena.]

Brandon: Come, Kayla. This is gonna be entertaining!

[Brandon closes the door and joins the upper row in the arena. Meanwhile, Nicole starts to lose control again and mentally drowns in her monstrosity. But this time the pain is worse than ever. The muzzle around her jaw breaks by the power of her teeth elongating, her clothing rips heavily and exposes her wilder fur than ever. She

grunts and yells into the air while she holds her head tightly. She feels like her skull is about to burst. She then raises her head up high and lets out a terrifying roar, which only lowers its pitch even more. The beast, taken the place of Nicole, manages to free herself from the chain. She then charges straight for the entrance of the cell and bursts through its bars without any problem. She shakes off the broken iron and gets on all fours. She runs around, trying to find Brandon. He, being high up in the crowd, snaps his fingers and gives one of his gang members a sign. The member pushes another button and this time, a large gate opens up. Two big foxes reveal themselves, which are made vicious by torture...]

Chapter 20 - Nothing but a beast



[The foxes sprint towards Nicole while exposing their teeth. Nicole freezes in confusion for a second and gets bitten by both of them in her tail and shoulder. Her, being more than twice the size, violently shakes them off her and roars out of pain. She immediately grabs one of the foxes and scratches deeply into its side when she realizes that her claws aren't covered anymore. The other fox immediately lets go and sees that its friend stopped moving. Nicole takes her chance and pounces onto the other fox. She digs her claws into the head of the animal, which yelps in pain. Blood runs down her arms and she narrows her eyes as she continues ending the aggressive fox. She pins it down and bites in its chest, powerfully closing her jaws until she breaks through its bones. Nicole slowly walks away from the dead foxes and pants. What is going on? She forgot everything. She doesn't remember who she is... And only feels lust for kill.

Meanwhile, Brandon has his mouth open in shock and surprise. He did it... He broke her. He made her reach the Upper Limit again. That's what you get, monster, he thinks and commands another gang member to put the savage Nicole back into a cell again. Nicole is wild and restless, but extremely exhausted at the same time. She starts losing energy and lays down, only to get caught with chains again...]

[The scene cuts to 10PM at the Wattersons house. The boys are going to bed and Richard gets surprised when he doesn't see Anais in their bedroom. He walks downstairs and encounters his daughter

intensely typing on her laptop and printing multiple papers.]

Richard: Sweetie? You're still out of bed?

Anais: [Stops typing and looks her father in the eye] I found it!

Richard: What?

Anais: I found a way to reverse the effects of the C.U.B.-core and destroy it!

[Anais grabs some papers and sits down on the couch with her father.]

Anais: Look; "C.U.B., 'Control Under Balance'. The only way to end a sabotaged core's lifetime is to destroy the victim's attachment."

Richard: What does that mean?

Anais: It means we need to find that core in the first place and get rid of whatever is put inside.

Richard: Like, now?

Anais: Yes! We need to do it as quickly as possible!

Richard: But your mother said I had to make sure you go to bed on time!

Anais: Dad! It's Mom who we have to save now! There's no time to lose!

[Anais jumps from the couch and grabs her backpack. She puts some of the articles and other handy tools inside it.]

Anais: So, just in case.

Richard: What about Gumball and Darwin?

Anais: We can leave them sleep. I can't do this on my own, Dad.

Richard: I know.

[Anais and Richard nod at each other and leave in the car, on their way to the Animal Control Centre. Thanks to Anais' clever and unsuspicious talking, they manage to receive the last location where the van went. Now they're on their way to the remote place, where Nicole is being kept in captivity.]

[Nicole's mind is blurrier than ever. She got chained up by much stronger ironwork and aggressively tries to break free from them. The room is fully dark and the other animals at the end of the corridor can't even be heard. The silence is loud as Nicole hears her own heart beating. She's exhausted, but restless. Everything is lost... She probably won't see her family anymore, she lost her job again and most of all... She went over her biggest limit she's ever had. She felt nothing but rage when she killed the foxes and didn't even get shocked afterwards. The chains around her neck and wrists are way too tight. She then realizes that she isn't wearing a muzzle and tries to chew on the iron. It unfortunately doesn't work and she lays down in defeat.

Anger and grief flow through her as she curls herself up and covers her eyes with her clawed paws. Everything still hurts and she eventually starts to get hungry. Is she gonna rot here for the rest of her life? She tries to sleep by closing her eyes, but doesn't manage to. She gets up on her hind legs and bends a bit over, due to her condition. She looks around, trying to find something edible, but stumbles upon nothing but the stone walls, metal and iron bars. She sits down as she starts feeling rather sad than angry. She notices the small bowl of water in front of her and looks at her own reflection. She gets terrified for a second of what she sees; extremely wild fur, covered in bloodstains, glowing yellow eyes and horribly sharp teeth. Her clothing isn't worth anything anymore as it's ripped to shreds. She lowers her ears and cries when she regains a little bit of her normal senses. She did not expect Brandon to suddenly appear in front of her.]

Brandon: Enjoying your misery?

[Nicole raises her head and stares him furiously in the eye. She speaks in a terrifyingly deep, monstrous voice.]

Nicole: What do you want from me?

Brandon: Well, as I quite enjoy that my plan worked out perfectly and don't want to end the fun here-

Nicole: Let me guess... You're gonna let me starve to death here?

Brandon: Well, no. Those criminals are having the best time of their life watching your violence and they're even willing to pay me.

Nicole: WHAT?! You're destroying me AND getting PAID FOR IT NOW?!

Brandon: Hush, kitty. That's nothing for you to worry about. Now, you want *this*?

[Brandon reveals a big tuna from behind his back and teases Nicole a bit. Nicole, who's normal senses immediately get blocked out by her monstrosity, tries to catch the fish.]

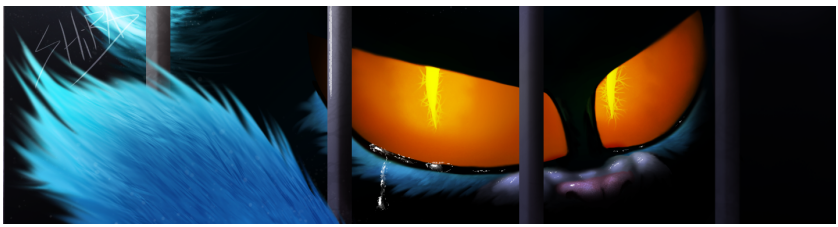
Nicole: S...stop it!

[Nicole bumps her head into the cell's bars as consequence of her chasing. She yelps and falls backwards while holding her head. She grunts and Brandon gazes his hand through the cell bars, immediately grabbing Nicole's chained collar and pulling her head closer. He lets the fish swing in front of her nose with his other hand and Nicole whines.]

Brandon: You should be grateful that I'm not getting you killed, Nicole. And I hope you finally learned your lesson.

[Nicole can't take it anymore. Her pupils constrict even more as drool drips from her mouth. Brandon lets her go and looks at her in disgust. She gets up on all fours and shivers out of exhaustion. Brandon sighs and throws the fish inside her cell. Nicole jumps towards it and devours it in seconds. She then looks around and sees that Brandon left the room...]

Chapter 21 - The Alpha



[Richard stops the car when he and Anais see the big, dark grey building. They quickly get out and search for any possible entrance. Anais pulls a flashlight out of her bag and tries to search in the shadows. She then finds a small lever and pulls it. A very small gate opens up, just big enough for her to fit through.]

Anais: I'll go inside, Dad. Maybe I can find a way to open another entrance.

[Richard nods and Anais makes her way into the building. It's pitch black inside and she turns on her flashlight again. She finds a door and tries to open it, but doesn't manage to, due to it being jammed. She tries calling her father and knocks on the door, but the walls are too thick for her voice to be heard at the other side. Her attention suddenly goes to the animals' calls behind her. She walks through the corridor and shivers a bit out of fright. She sees big felines staring at her from the darkness as she makes her way to the end of the corridor. Richard, who heard some of Anais' knocking on the door, uses his weight to bust it open and makes his way inside.]

Richard: Anais! Where are you?!

Anais: I'm here! At the end of this corridor!

[Richard tries his best to run quickly towards his daughter, who freezes in front of a big cell. Anais notices that her father caught up with her and she walks closer to the cell, until she can touch its bars. Richard wants to say something, but she hushes him. Soft growling and panting can be heard inside, but it's too dark to properly see anything. Anais sniffs her small bunny nose and

immediately recognizes her mother's smell. But there's something wrong with it... She also smells blood and fears the worst.]

Anais: D-Dad? I think Mom might have been k-killed?

[Richard gulps and takes Anais' flashlight. He notices the cell's keys when he shines it on the wall next to it. He grabs them and slowly opens the cell door, trying his best not to make a sound. He then enters it while keeping the light as low as possible.]

Anais: [Whispers] Dad! What do you think you're doing?!

[Richard shushes her and continues walking towards the shadow in the corner. The panting gets louder as he comes closer...

Nicole's heartbeat goes crazily fast as her head is more restless than ever. She's curled up in the corner of the cell and pants by the tension in her body. Her muscles still feel like they're burning and she can't think clearly because of her head that aches. She suddenly hears the cell door open up and her pupils constrict as she glares from the shadows. A silhouette with a flashlight comes closer to her and she starts feeling rather unsafe. She suddenly reveals herself from the darkness and snarls while her claws unsheathe again. On all fours, with her head low, she stares at the figure who gasps and takes quicker steps towards her. With every step he takes, she growls louder, until he's close enough for her to see his identity. The pink bunny stares in deep concern at her and she immediately stops growling when she recognizes him.]

Richard: N-Nicole?

[Nicole's eyes widen and she jumps into his arms without thinking twice. She hugs her husband tightly while tears flow down her cheeks. He drops the flashlight and holds her head with one paw while caressing her back with the other. She hugs him even tighter until her claws accidentally stab his skin, but he tries his best to ignore the pain. He has her back. They are together again and he can't be any happier. Nicole looks him in the eye and sobs uncontrollably. She tries to speak, but doesn't manage to do it properly.]

Nicole: [While sobbing and whispering] I... I'm so sorry...

[Richard dries her tears with his paw and hushes her.]

Richard: [Whispers] It's okay, honey. Now, let me get you out of here.

[Richard searches for the right key to unlock the chains and Anais rips the C.U.B.-core from the cell bar where it was attached in the meantime. She pulls a screwdriver out of her bag and opens up the core. She encounters a hair from her mother and pulls it out. The C.U.B-core immediately shuts down and its light stops shining. Anais cuts some wires of the device and makes it unusable. She then drops it and angrily kicks it.]

Anais: That's for all the agony you've brought my mother!

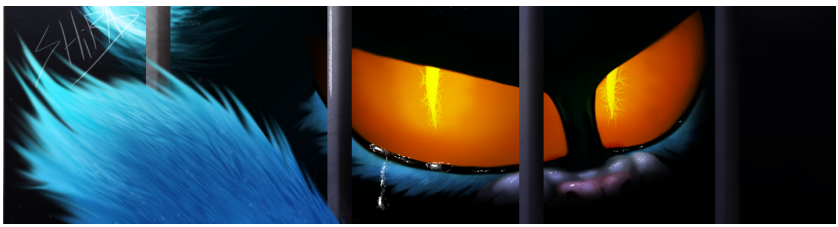
[She then follows Richard's steps inside the cell and sees that he managed to release Nicole from the chains. Anais freezes and cowers a bit from her mother's monstrous appearance. Nicole notices this and crouches to her daughter's level. Anais doesn't dare to look her mother in the eye. The blood on her fur and sharp teeth scare her too much. Nicole lowers her ears and slowly approaches Anais, who hides her face with her long, floppy ears. Nicole doesn't say a word and wraps her arms around the little bunny. Anais moves her ears away and raises her head. Her mother's eyes are still glowing yellow, but they are full of love. She doesn't mean any harm at all and hugs her daughter, who feels a little less scared.]

Anais: [Whispers] Come on, we have to get out of here!

[Nicole and Richard nod and they all run quickly towards the door which Richard burst through earlier. Anais and Richard manage to get outside the building again, but when Nicole wants to walk through the door, she suddenly gets struck by a taser in the back. She is powerful enough not to paralyze by the electricity, but can't take another step. Two of Brandon's gang members have entered the room and run towards them through the corridor. Richard turns around and tells his daughter to get in the car while he runs back. He uses his weight to push the two men aside and Nicole gets freed from the taser. She shakes her fur and sees that they try to attack

her husband. She then slams her left paw on the ground, creating a small shockwave which catches the men's attention. She lowers her head and her fiery eyes meet Richard's. She then lets out a vicious roar, which provokes the other big felines in the cages. Loud scratching sounds and other roars can be heard from the sides of the corridor. The felines stare at their blue alpha, who waves her tail aggressively. They all then try to break free and Nicole jumps to the wall behind her, pushing the red button which opens up all the cages. The big felines rush out of their enclosures and attack the two gang members. Nicole and Richard then take their chance to run away to the car, after Nicole glared on more time at the men who are being torn apart by the big cats...]

Chapter 22 - Insanity



[The scene cuts to 8AM the next morning, when Brandon encounters two of his gang members dead. There's no sign of Nicole and the other felines. He has enough and calls in Kayla, telling her to end the blue cat's life. Yes, end. He actually wanted to have her killed, for real this time. Kayla strongly hesitates at first, but eventually accepts it as she wants to get out of there as quickly as possible. But when Kayla is driving on her way home, she refuses. She knows she doesn't want to kill Nicole. She even realizes that it wasn't Nicole's fault at all that she murdered her husband. It was the sabotaged C.U.B.-core! What a *stupid* plan!, Kayla angrily thinks. She's done with Brandon and wants to avenge her husband. Kayla is about to do the unthinkable...]

3.00PM

[The kids stare in disbelief at their mother after she told them about everything that happened. They all, including her, are shocked by the whole situation.]

Gumball: So... What are y-you gonna do now, Mom?

Nicole: I don't know, sweetie. I really don't know. You've seen the papers; Elmore sees me as a wild animal and Brandon is probably still after me.

Richard: No. I will not let them take you away again.

Nicole: B-but Richard dear, you do realize I-

Richard: No! I will protect you at all cost.

[He wraps his arms around his wife. Nicole lowers her ears and sighs.]

Nicole: That's sweet, but... I can't hide away forever. How are we gonna survive? I lost my job again!

Richard: We need to discuss this all with your boss.

Nicole: From Sca-BI? No way, they won't trust me.

Richard: I actually am talking about Mr. Yoshida, honey. From what I can remember, he has a lot of contact with the police and they could put all proof on the table.

[Nicole nods and frowns. It sounds like a good plan to her. As long as she could finally get rid of Brandon. Or... for good...]

Nicole: I'll think about it. Now I need some rest. Could you wake me up just in time for dinner?

Richard: Sure, honey. No problem.

[The couple share a smile and Nicole disappears into the bedroom. Richard and the kids, who feel a bit more relieved, settle on the couch to watch some television. Nothing in particular, but they wanted to keep their mother company on the lower floor of the house.

Nicole feels scared... No, she's terrified. The core which bugged her all this time might have been destroyed, but she hasn't gotten rid of her condition. She feels her heart pounding in her chest while she lays on her side and anger starts flowing through her veins. Why is *she* on the run? He is the one who should be scared, she thinks. She then tries to calm herself down by taking deep breaths, but it's no use. She has enough. It is all too much. He made her feel bad about the supermarket incident, he treated her like trash, he pushed her to the Upper Limit, he tried to kill her and made her lose her job *twice*. But most of all... He provoked the worst in her... He insulted her and called her a monster... Well, he's so right!, she thinks. And now he's gonna face it!

Nicole knows it's too early to take action, but feels all the rage

intensively bottling up inside her again. She quickly turns around and takes a pillow which she holds in front of her face, still trying to calm down. But instead, she rips it half with her claws and a terrifying toothy grin appears on her face. She starts drowning in her anger and insanity. Her left eye twitches and pupils constrict while she lays on her back... there in the dark. She snickers and then starts psychotically chuckling.]

Nicole: [Whispers to herself] Look what I've become... [Chuckles] Look at the mess I've made... Look at what you made me do!

[She holds her head tightly due another headache spiking up and accidentally scratches some parts of her face open with her sharp claws. But she doesn't give in to the pain. She got used to the worst and keeps smiling while a bit of blood runs down her head...]

[The clock reads 6PM when Richard wakes up his wife for dinner. She fell asleep earlier and now joins her family at the table, while hiding her dark emotions. It's a calm, brief dinner until it gets interrupted by a knock on the door. The Wattersons stare in silence at each other for a second, but Nicole eventually goes to open it. She then finds Kayla at her doorstep.]

Kayla: Hey, Nicole. I'm so sorry if I interrupt.

Nicole: [Immediately lowers her ears and defensively bares her teeth] Don't tell me you're gonna get me back to that cage, you female dog.

Kayla: No, listen. I know it's very sudden and all, I also know we got off on the wrong foot, but you have to trust me.

Nicole: Go on...

Kayla: I refuse to cooperate with Brandon ever again.

Nicole: Excuse me, come again? I though he paid-

Kayla: Yes. I know. But I'm so done. It's his darn fault that you showed my husband the wrong side of your claws.

Nicole: So what do you want from me?

Kayla: Nothing. I don't expect anything from you. But I only wanted to give you my word and apology. And something that might help you.

[Kayla hands over a small card to Nicole and Nicole reads an address on it.]

Nicole: This is-?

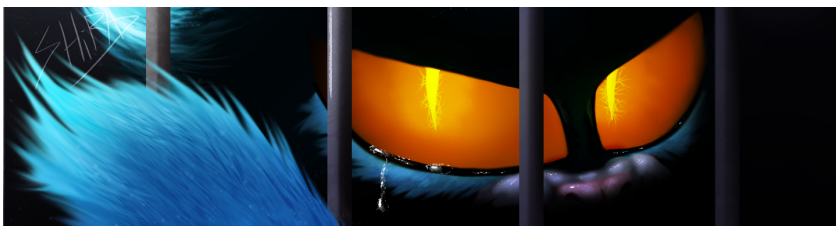
Kayla: Yes. It's Brandon's personal address. It's the apartment where he actually lives. Friendly reminder that he gave me a task to kill you- which I obviously failed.

Nicole: He WHAT?!

Kayla: Yes, I know it's crazy. But I'll be off now. I won't tell anyone anything, Nicole. I might speak you later.

[Nicole gulps and forces herself not to lash out as she lets Kayla leave. She admits she never really hated the dog and knows everyone can make mistakes. But not such of a huge mistake Brandon makes right now! After Nicole finished dinner, she tells her family that she's going grocery shopping. But it's in fact not the supermarket where she is heading...]

Chapter 23 - Monster of a mother



[Nicole furiously follows the directions to the given address on Elmore Maps. She is even determined enough to proceed by foot instead of taking the car. No, her head can't handle focussing while driving right now. Her heart pounds heavily when she takes every step. Everyone she comes across goes out of her way when they see her glowing yellow eyes. Nothing can stop her. And when any Elmore citizen wants to call the law enforcement on her, she melts their phone with her heat vision. Yes, she is this furious. Her normal senses start fading away when she sees that she arrived at the final destination. She only hopes that she can trust Kayla into giving her the right address, but when she sees Brandon's car parked in front of the apartments, she doesn't doubt anything. She puts her phone away and stands completely still in front of the entrance. She analyzes the nametags and sees that Brandon lives in apartment number four. She then walks to the other side of the building and notices an open window. She eventually starts trembling and prepares for *it* to come out again. But she doesn't want this to happen...

If she'd end it all now, she at least wants to keep some dignity. But it's too late. She's too enraged to stay with her normal senses and once again fears the worst. Her bones feel like they are piercing through her muscles and she grunts when she feels that her gums start bleeding. It's all happening way too fast now, as the pain is uncontainable. She pants and spits out some blood from her mouth. She then almost falls over, but manages to stay standing with her head against the wall. She tries to grab hold onto the bricks while

she rips through her clothing again. A heavy cramp in her back causes her to bend down. And in doing so, her claws scratch deeply into the stone wall, creating a horrible sound which scares nearby birds away. She then curls up while sitting on the grassy floor and covers her eyes with her paws. She first tries to stay calm by taking deep breaths, but terribly fails to do so.

She still sees the open window in the corner of her vision and gnarls. She then rises up when the pain fades a little and does the unexpected. She starts climbing. Bit by bit while trying to stay as quiet as possible, she makes her way up and crawls onto the apartment's balcony. The light is too bright when she gets inside and she narrows her eyes. On all fours, while staying stealthy, she sneaks to a second room where Brandon is collecting his laundry. He peacefully hangs his outfits on clothing hangers and isn't even aware of Nicole being there. Nicole's heart starts beating faster as she starts losing her mind. Without thinking twice, she jumps up to the ceiling and cuts a few wires with her claws. The rooms all turn dark and Brandon drops the shirt he had in his hands. He looks around and tries to examine what happened. He walks into the living room and commits his biggest mistake ever...

Brandon can't see a thing and freezes when he suddenly hears a very deep growl behind him. He gasps and quickly turns his head, but still sees nothing but darkness. He then turns around and looks straight into yellow glowing eyes which widen out of fury. The beast, which meows deeply, comes closer until Brandon can see its silhouette in the moonlight. Its back is bent, its claws are sharper than daggers and nothing else can be seen than its glowing eyes and shiny, long teeth. Brandon can't believe it and starts freaking out. He wants to run away, but Nicole grabs him by the collar with her claws. She pins him down and lets them dig deeply into his arms. He yells it out in agony and Nicole's pupils constrict further by hearing him suffer. She heartlessly continues until blood flows on her paws. She then bares her gigantic teeth and opens up her jaws. Brandon paralyzes out of fright when he sees her saliva drip on his suit. He begs for mercy while looking at the terrifying teeth, but it's all over for him. Nicole moves forward, faster than the speed of light, and bites him in his throat. It feels similar like when she killed Jay, but this time she drowns in her insanity. The blood

doesn't even make her gag at the moment. A terrifying grin appears on her face again when she feels that the man she hated most stopped moving. She quickly jumps off him and pants while looking at her vicious crime scene. She did it again... But she had no choice, she suddenly thinks and decides to run back home before her normal senses would return...]

11.00PM

[Richard screams in terror when he encounters his ragged-up wife with blood on her mouth and paws. Nicole feels dizzier than ever and barely can stand up straight. While trying not to pass out, she hushes him.]

Richard: W-where have you b-been? What h-have you done?!

Nicole: Honey... I- I promise you, this was the last time... [Gags when she tastes the blood again]

Richard: D-done what?

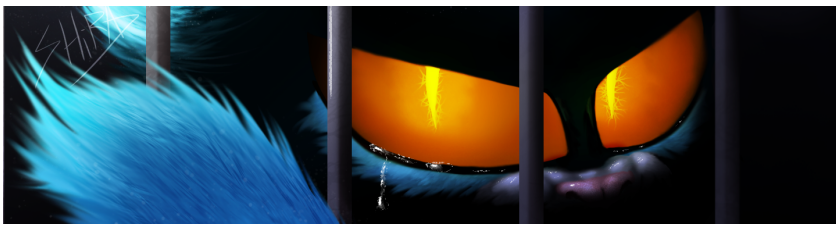
[Nicole looks him in the eye and tells him to sit down.]

Nicole: I know it's completely over the top, b-but... I gladly announce, [Almost barfs, but takes a deep breath instead] that Brandon is gone forever...

[Richard notices that his wife is actually getting sick and put his paws on her shoulders to calm her down. He prefers not to talk too much about it, as he doesn't know what to think. So he supports Nicole when she makes her way to the bathroom, where she washes all blood off her fur. It's a total disaster when Nicole eventually passes out and Richard is more than glad that the kids are asleep. He carries his over-exhausted wife to bed and tucks her in. It got all too much for her. Rest now, he thinks and closes the bedroom door. Richard is terrified. She completely lost control and committed a *second* murder... What is he supposed to do? He knows she would never hurt him on purpose, but her condition got to its worst. Richard feels a bit stressed and nervously nibbles on a bar of chocolate. He feels really tired, but doesn't dare to sleep with his wife at all. So he settles on the couch and stares at the clock for a

while, before falling asleep.]

Chapter 24 - Weakness



Monday 7.00PM

[It's evening when Richard and Nicole are sitting at Mr. Yoshida's desk. They just put all proof of the situation on the table and wait for his response. He's in deep thoughts and slowly clicks his pen. Richard is sweating out of fear while he lets Nicole squeeze his paw. Nicole's ears and shoulders are low and she feels sick again. The ambience in the room is freaky as there's low lighting and very dark shadows. Nicole looks down at the floor while her eyes are still yellowish. She is holding Richard's paw with one of hers and holds her head with the other. She is wearing a brand-new uniform and most of her body has gone back to normal for now, but her fur is still rough and her demons haven't left her... She is still very shocked about the two murders from shortly ago and her sickness gets worse as her stomach aches. Richard sees that she's broken and worries more than ever. After a few minutes which felt like hours, Yoshida share his words.]

Yoshida: Well, I can fully see that it wasn't fully on you, Nicole. It's absolutely horrific what you've done, but I think you've had enough punishment now.

Nicole: [In a raspy voice] S-so... What do I do now?

Yoshida: I can offer you your job back after your recovery, *but* on a few conditions.

Nicole: I'm listening.

Yoshida: You need to revisit your therapist as soon as possible and

we must take some safety precautions when you work in these offices again. For example, you will have to wear a muzzle during your shift.

Nicole: [Sighs] I completely understand.

Yoshida: All right. Now if you excuse me, I need to be at my next appointment.

[Nicole and Richard nod, then leave the office after respectfully greeting the Rainbow Factory founder.]

[The scene cuts to when the couple is in the car. Richard starts the engine, but doesn't leave yet. Tears flow down Nicole's cheeks as she feels terrible.]

Nicole: I- I'm such a mess, Richard!

[Richard turns to her and rubs her back with his paw.]

Nicole: I just... I don't want to bring you and the kids into danger again. What if I snap again?

Richard: Look honey, I hate to say it, but I'm afraid we're gonna have to treat it like a disease.

[Nicole wipes away her tears and looks him in the eye.]

Richard: I am the one who will keep you calm, dear. I know how, but you need to trust me.

[Nicole nods and Richard hugs her. She buries her face in his shoulder and he continues rubbing her back. He then hushes her while caressing her ears.]

Richard: [Whispers while tearing up a bit] It's okay, honey. I'm here for you. Things are gonna get better...

[Nicole sniffs a few times and it seems like she's calming down, but her heartbeat suddenly speeds up. Her claws unsheathe and as she was hugging Richard, they dig into his back. Richard shrieks and wants to look at his wife's face, but she only tightens her grip on

him. Serious scars appear on the pink bunny's back.]

Richard: H-honey? What a-are you doing?

[Richard's eyes widen out of fear when he hears his wife growling and panting. She has her eyes closed and bares her teeth out of agony. The beast within is restless and it messes with her body, as her back crackles painfully. Richard starts feeling genuinely endangered and then hears her meowing deeply and hissing. He tries to ignore the pain by her claws and continues caressing her, hoping to calm her down.]

Richard: [Whispers] P-please honey... Stay calm... It's okay now.

Nicole: [Growls and speaks in a deep voice] The medicine stopped working, Richard.

[Richard gasps and grabs Nicole by her waist when she loosens her grip. She calms down and almost passes out. Richard carefully puts her back in the passenger seat and glares at her shocking appearance. Her bleak fur, her visible exhaustion and the drool by her mouth indicate that she's feeling more unwell. Richard then drives her home and immediately tucks her in when they returned. He joins her for a while and strokes her ears until she falls asleep. Richard then gets up and calls for another appointment at the therapist. After hanging up, he starts to feel extreme grief and fear. He misses the old Nicole, 'his Nicole'! Who he remembers from his childhood. The badass fighting Nicole, not the monstrous murdering one. She turned into a beast... and now? What is he supposed to do? Will he become the next prey of this predator? No, he thinks. Time to stop these nonsense thoughts. She might be vicious, but oh boy, he's still in love with this 'monster'. He then realizes he can ask the therapist for advice in a few days. Why am I so worried, he thinks and calms a bit down. He sighs and settles in the living room.

Nicole lies in deep slumber while a cold breeze makes its way through the room. It starts raining heavily outside and water floods down the windows. It's too dark to clearly see anything, but Nicole's silhouette is fully visible as her limbs start jerking a bit. Her nose twitches and she frowns sometimes. She starts sweating heavily as she experiences the worst nightmare in her life...]

Only darkness. Then. A white flash...

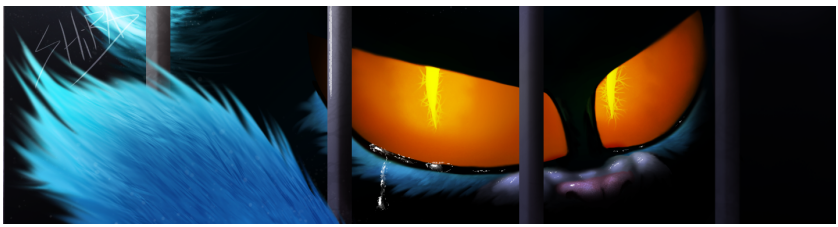
Nicole opens her eyes and looks around. She's standing in the middle of the living room and she's on her own. No signs of her husband or three kids, as they are asleep. It's dark and probably midnight, she thinks. She starts to feel a bit tired and decides to go to bed. She first gets a glass of water from the kitchen and makes her way into the living room. She sits down on the couch for a while.

Suddenly, her attention goes to the mirror next to the staircase. She gets up and walks towards it, while finishing her water. She sees her reflection and sighs when she wonders why it caught her attention. But then something rather strange starts to happen. Nicole wants to turn around, but suddenly sees her reflection change. It doesn't move like how she does and seems like it's living its own life. She gasps and freaks out a little. Her reflection starts to terrifyingly morph until she sees the 'Upper Limit' version of herself. But way worse. Its teeth are even more horribly sharp and its fur is rough and covered in blood. The glowing yellow pupils inspect her and a broad grin appears on its face. Nicole takes a step back and cowers a bit. "W-what is happening?" she stutters. The monstrous Nicole grabs hold onto the sides of the mirror with its claws and crawls out of it.

It gets closer to her and calls her in a deep, terrifying voice:
"Niicoooole... Dooon't be so scared..."

"W-who are you?! What d-do you want f-from me?!"...

Chapter 25 - Fear



*The monstrous Nicole speaks: "**AHAHAHAH! I... am you!-**"*

It points at Nicole.

*"**- but in the future!**"*

Nicole shakes her head and frowns. "No! This can't be true! You're only in my head!"

*"**My dear... Gosh! Things aren't looking so good for youuuu...**"*

"What does that mean?!"

*The monstrous Nicole gets even closer and looks down on its normal self, now being twice the size. "**You. Are nothing but a beast, darling. You might not believe it now, but oh boy. You don't know what damage you're about to make...**"*

"N-no! I-I don't believe you! I'd never hurt a soul! G-get out!"

*"**Oh, oh, what a pity. 'Wouldn't hurt a soul', ay? Then what about... the hunt you're going on?!**"*

Suddenly, a dead Richard appears next to the monstrous Nicole. His body is covered in deep slits and blood flows everywhere. The monstrous Nicole grabs him and takes a bite. (The actual) Nicole gasps and her eyes start tearing up. "S-stop it! I'm nothing like that!"

*"**Your fluffy boy is just the beginning, fooool! YOU WILL END THEM ALL!**"*

"But why?! I'm nothing like this! I'd never do that! I-I'M NOTHING LIKE YOU!!"

The monstrous Nicole lets Richard disappear and makes the living room get even darker. It gets closer and grabs its normal self by the cheeks. ***"Or are you...?"***

Before Nicole knows it, her mind gets melt together with the one of her monstrous self. There's a bright red flash and Nicole collapses. She then reopens her eyes and sees everything around her went back to normal. She rushes to the bedroom door and sighs deeply in relief when she hears Richard snoring, indicating that he was still there. She then looks around and sees the mirror again. But when she looks into it, she sees it; the curse of her Limit stages has unfolded itself. Her body's tension, her glowing eyes and sharp teeth will keep haunting her. She falls to her knees and yells...

"IT'S A CURSEEEE..."

[Nicole wakes up and gasps. She pants quickly and starts sobbing. She feels so lost... Disgusted by her own monstrosity, she starts pulling her claws. Tears fall on the sheets and blood soon enough joins them. She doesn't manage to rip out her claws, but her nail beds bleed. She hides her face in her paws as shock runs through her body and her tail twitches. She eventually receives the power to get up from the bed and she slowly approaches the door. Everything feels odd to her when her paw pads touch the floor with every step. Her eyes are wide open and focus on the light that comes from underneath the door.

She twists the doorknob and glares through the opening. She reads 11PM on the clock in the living room and sees Richard watching television. She then exits the bedroom and stands next to the couch while resting her paw on it. Suddenly, she sees that her claws are unsheathed; but when she blinks again, they disappeared. Nicole nervously holds her paws together and Richard notices his wife. They stare into each others' eyes for a brief moment. Nicole sees Richard's worried expression and can hear his heart beating quickly, indicating he was scared. Weird, she thinks, since when is my hearing *this* sensitive? She then shyly lowers her head and ears.]

Nicole: H-honey? Mind if I join you?

Richard: ...Oh, s-sure! What's the matter?

[Nicole sits down on the couch while keeping distance. But Richard is brave enough to move closer and even wraps an arm around her. Nicole gets more nervous by this, but speaks up anyway.]

Nicole: I just... wanted to let you know I'm still deeply sorry for what I've done... I'm such a terrible mother and I really don't know what to do anymore.

[Richard sees that she starts tearing up again and notices her red eyes, indicating she had been crying before.]

Nicole: [Starts sobbing] I- I d-don't want to hurt any of you, just know that... I would kill myself if I'd ever get my teeth on any of you.

Richard: It's okay, honey. But you're not like this, you're way better. You are an amazing mother, Nicole. You might suffer a lot, but all of this has been too much to deal with.

Nicole: [Sighs and has a slight smile for a second] B-but... [Expression immediately turns to grief again] What are we gonna do about my condition?

Richard: We will speak with the therapist soon, dear. He can give us advice. Or else we can improvise, you know? For example, you're gonna have to wear a muzzle at work, right?

Nicole: Y-yes, but I don't think that's enough to sedate me...

Richard: Some heavier calming pills? Or a tranquilizer dart?

Nicole: I guess that could work...

[Nicole calms a bit down and hugs Richard.]

Richard: Just remember I still love you, honey. I know it isn't the real you who you transform into now and then.

Nicole: [Smiles] Yeah... I love you too.

Richard: You better keep it in mind or else I'm getting the silverware! [Smirks and snickers]

Nicole: [Giggles] I'm not a werewolf, silly!

Richard: Oh yeah, [Laughs] but your big teeth ain't innocent.

Nicole: [Sighs] Yeah...

[The couple smile at each other and Nicole gets in deep thoughts...]

Nicole: Richard?

Richard: Yes, dear?

Nicole: I've been wondering... Why does my monstrous form look like that? I mean, I remember having glowing eyes and sharp teeth in the supermarket incident, but... not such heavy agony. I didn't even rip out of my clothes then and my headaches weren't even so bad compared to what I've been going through so far...

Richard: Nicole, I think it's the possible outing of how you feel, not who you are...

Nicole: But how do you explain the fact that my instincts take over when it happens? That's the complete opposite of how I feel or who I want to be.

Richard: You're a cat to begin with. Your fiery temper for the record, doesn't go well together with your species.

Nicole: [Raises an eyebrow] What do you mean?

Richard: I, uh... I don't mean it in a wrong way, but I think it's because you're a predator?

Nicole: What? No! You don't see our son behaving like this.

Richard: That's because he's still young, Nicole.

Nicole: So what? What are you trying to say with... that 'I'm a

predator'?

[Fury starts to rise a bit inside Nicole as her eyebrows tilt into an angry expression. Richard notices this and regrets his choice of words.]

Richard: N-no, honey please! I don't mean it like this... I'm just scared...

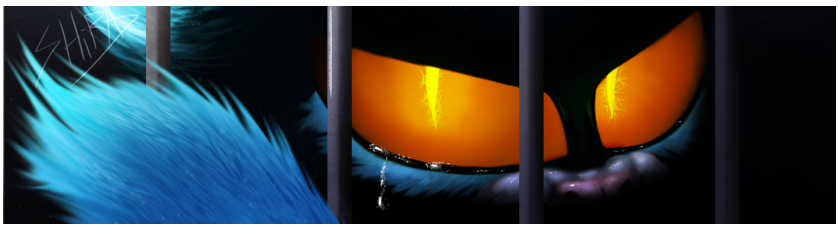
Nicole: [Raises her voice] Scared of what, Richard?

[Richard shuts his mouth and sternly closes his eyes. He starts shivering and sweating.]

Nicole: [With a demanding tone] Say it! What are you so scared of?!

...

Chapter 26 - Prey and predator



[Richard gets shocked by her tone and forces himself to obey her.]

Richard: [Yells while tearing up] I'm just scared you'll eat me like I'm your prey!

[He immediately backs away and cowers from his wife.]

Nicole: What?! No, Richard! I-

[Nicole sees her husband hiding his face and avoiding eye contact with her. She clenches her paws into fists and feels her anger growing into rage.]

Nicole: You just said I was fine! You said I was better than this... Then how can I possibly believe *you* if you don't believe it *yourself*?!

[Richard stays silent and his eyes widen out of fear. Nicole bares her teeth and her voice lowers its pitch.]

Nicole: Y-you still see me as a monster, do you?!

Richard: N-no honey, I- I just-

Nicole: [Yells while a roar accompanies her voice] **I TURNED INTO A MONSTER AND WILL REMAIN ONE!**

[Nicole storms off upstairs and in doing so, her now unsheathed claws tear the fabric of the couch. Richard gulps and stands next to the stairs. Nicole looks at her reflection in the mirror and pants. She lowers her head and snarls when she hears Richard's footsteps

coming up the stairs. The fur on her back rises up when he suddenly hugs her from behind.]

Richard: [Whispers] I'm sorry, honey. I didn't mean to hurt your feelings. I- I of course still love you!

[Nicole tilts her head a bit and stares him angrily in the eye. To his horror, he sees that her eyes are glowing yellow and she starts trembling in his grip.]

Richard: [Trying to calm her down] N-no please, honey. D-don't get enraged, I beg you... Control it, control it!

[Nicole's rage starts mixing up with grief, but she can't handle what she's about to do. She grits her teeth as her fangs elongate again. Suddenly, she turns around and scratches Richard straight on his cheek with her claws. Richard screams it out and almost falls over by the power in Nicole's attack. Nicole freezes while she is bending forward and pants. Richard covers the three deep, bleeding slits in his cheek and turns his back towards his wife. Blood drips from Nicole's claws and she keeps staring blankly at the floor. She is still shivering and a shock runs through her body when she tastes some of the blood, which got onto the corner her mouth. Her instincts start to rise within her and she silently begs herself to stay calm. P-please... d-don't let this happen!, she thinks.

She no longer can think clearly as she gets on all fours. Richard looks behind his shoulder in terror only to see her drooling heavily. Oh gosh, what did I say?!, he restlessly thinks and hides behind the bathroom door like a scared child. Nicole still doesn't move a muscle and only her ears twitch a bit. She then closes her eyes and her heart starts beating faster. Richard, who thinks she's calming down, comes closer and wants to check if she's okay. But when he reaches out his paw, he immediately hesitates when he hears her growling. Richard shivers out of fear when his eyes meet hers. She then suddenly rises up, standing on her hind legs again and towers above the pink bunny. Her yellow pupils constrict further as she speaks words Richard rather forgets...]

Nicole: [In a deep, terrifying voice] **You need to... RUUUN... NOW**!

[Nicole pounces straight into Richard's direction, but he manages to dodge her and runs downstairs. Nicole crashes into the mirror above the sink due her velocity and glass shatters everywhere. She furiously gets up on all fours again and shakes the glass out of her fur. She proceeds chasing after Richard, until she can't find him anymore. She is downstairs, viciously looking around and on the hunt like a feral cat. Richard managed to run up the stairs again without her noticing and encounters the kids in their room after they woke up by all the noise.]

Darwin: Hey, Mr. Dad! We-

[Richard covers his adoptive son's mouth with his paw and shushes him. Anais and Gumball come closer and give him a confused look.]

Richard: [Whispers] It's the worst moment to be awake! Your mother has fully lost it again!

Gumball: [Whispers] B-but, how? I thought that meanie guy was gone or something?

Richard: [Nervously] Let's not talk about that. But no, it's not that anyway. Your mother... Well...

[Richard stays silent as he doesn't dare to finish his sentence.]

Gumball: What, Dad? You can tell us.

Richard: ...She... just still has troubles with her... not so sweet side.

Gumball: What does that even mean?

[Anais steps forward and takes a deep breath to speak.]

Anais: Mom is still suffering from all the consequences of the Limit-incident, which seemed to have gotten worse in this period. She goes through an extremely agonizing transformation into a monster whenever she reaches an upper point in her stress or rage. This all got provoked in the supermarket, but got worse by the sabotaged C.U.B.-core.

[The three boys' jaws drop open by astonishment and shock.]

Richard: How d-did you know?

Anais: [Sighs] I knew the entire time. I wish I never had to tell it, but I knew Mom's terrific grunting and screaming couldn't be any good.

Darwin: [Shivers out of fear] S-so, what now? Mrs. Mom i-is a werecat?

Anais: No, silly. Remember the rampage at Elmore Shopping? It's like that, but way worse.

Gumball: H-how aren't you scared, sis?

Anais: I am scared... terrified, Gumball. But deep down, I know this isn't the real Mom, guys.

[All four suddenly freeze when they hear a loud, deep meow coming from downstairs.]

Darwin: B-but that thing sure is a vicious hunter, ain't it?

Gumball: [Starts freaking out] What do we do, what do we do?!

Richard: We can't do anything but hide, or else we become cat food!

Anais: What?! How has it come this far?!

Richard: I-... I don't know. Our conversation got way out of hand.

Anais: Then what did you say to her?

Richard: I-

[Richard gets interrupted by Nicole suddenly bursting through the kids room's door.]

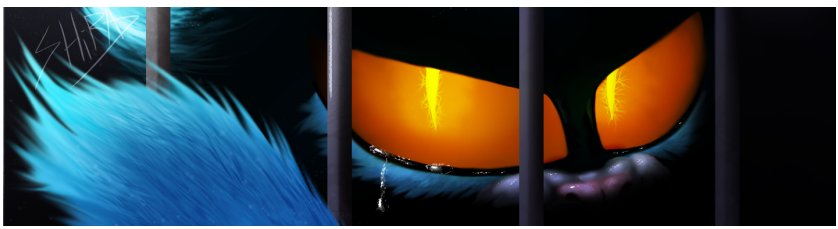
Nicole: [In a deep voice] You... see me as nothing but a dangerous predator!

[The kids scream and hide behind their father, whose mouth opens widely out of shock. Nicole stands on her hind legs, bending a bit

forward and stares her husband in the eye. She growls, baring her teeth and violently unsheathes her claws as she slowly approaches her family.]

...

Chapter 27 - The first step to reassurance



[Nicole is about to attack Richard, but stops when Anais and Darwin start crying helplessly. She sees her kids, terrified and shaking while they try to shelter each other. Nicole's ears drop and her eyes turn back to normal again. She tears up too and falls to the floor. Richard relaxes his shoulders and hugs his heartbroken wife. Nicole pushes him away.]

Nicole: N-no! G-get away from me! I c-could've killed you!

Richard: Please, Nicole... We will get help, okay?

Nicole: This is not okay, Richard! Can't you see what I've done?! This can't go on forever!

Richard: Y-you-

Nicole: I'm so sick of it! Sick, I tell you!

[Nicole angrily scratches her own arms open with her claws. She digs them deeply into her fur until blood flows on them.]

Nicole: *Rraaarghh*!

Richard: No, stop it! You're gonna horribly wound yourself!

Nicole: But I wounded you, didn't I!

[Richard sternly grabs her paws and uses all his might to hold her

still.]

Richard: Look at me, Nicole.

[Nicole keeps her head low and avoids eye contact.]

Richard: Look at me!

[Nicole raises her head and Richard's eyes widen when he sees her horrible condition. It is clearly visible she's more exhausted and Richard now understands why she was so sensitive.]

Richard: The appointment at the therapist is tomorrow. Can you stop hating yourself at least until then?

[Nicole gulps and nods. She is terrified and deeply ashamed. No one is safe around me anymore, she heartbrokenly thinks... Nicole hides her face with her paws and Richard signs the kids that it's fine now and they can come closer. Gumball is the first one to hug his mother and his siblings follow. Nicole calms a bit down and tightly hugs them back. She and Gumball touch each other with their noses and close their eyes. Gumball learned this gesture from her when he was still a kitten and she told him it was a feline's way to express calmness. Nicole then crouches to look all her three children in the eye and dries her tears.]

Nicole: R-remember, kids... that I love you more than anything.

Darwin: We k-know, M-Mrs. Mom. I j-just hope this all can be fixed.

[Nicole sighs and nods.]

Nicole: I-I still have a little bit of hope now. I'm just so tired... All this is just too exhausting for me.

Richard: You better get some rest now, Nicole. It's all gonna be fine.

[Nicole nods and smiles at her children before going downstairs. Richard and the kids sigh deeply in relief and decide to return to bed. Richard tucks the three in and goes downstairs too. Halfway in

the living room he freezes and sees another paper hanging next to the therapist's address on the fridge. He enters the kitchen and grabs it. He reads a phone number which is written down by hand with names next to it. His eyes widen when he recognizes them and feels determined enough to make a decision. 'Daniel and Mary Senicourt'...]

Tuesday 10.00AM

[It's a rainy morning when Nicole and Richard enter Erin Warrington's office again. He had also listened to Nicole's issues some months ago and is surprised to see the couple again. They all sit down and Erin offers the two a glass of water. Nicole nervously holds her paws together and her tail waves slowly. The therapist is aware of Nicole's committed crimes as he took precautions such as having tranquilizer darts and chains within reach.]

E. Warrington: So... Welcome back Mr. and Mrs. Watterson. I've heard some shocking news if I'm right and today I'm going to try to give come up with a possible solution.

[Nicole nods and Richard holds her paw to encourage her.]

E. Warrington: Please tell me, Mrs. Watterson, what is it that frightens you most?

Nicole: F-frightens? I, uh... I honestly think the scariest thing ever would be losing my family.

E. Warrington: Understandable. Now, why do you think... you went so far in almost attacking your loved ones in some situations?

Nicole: I honestly don't know... I usually am too enraged at that moments and my mind becomes like total static. I don't remember anything until I get my normal senses back or when I see the consequences of my action. [Sighs] Look sir, all I want is to cool down again. I believe it's a curse that got provoked to its worst. I want to learn how to control it... how to live with it.

[Erin nods and gets a medical briefcase from underneath his desk. He opens it and reveals a small device.]

E. Warrington: I've asked the hospital for some tools before your appointment and here I have something that could be useful.

Nicole: What is it?

E. Warrington: It's a device which will measure your blood pressure and keep track of other negative activity in your body. If you wear it incoming week, we can see immediate results afterwards.

Nicole: All right, I approve. But then isn't there anything you could give as advice in the meantime?

E. Warrington: I'm afraid not regarding your supernatural condition, but I do prescribe enough rest and try to switch from coffee to tea if you didn't already.

[He winks at Nicole, letting her know that last part was a joke and it makes her smile for a second.]

Nicole: Will do. Thank you, sir.

E. Warrington: Best of luck to both of you and I hope to see you next week.

[Nicole and Richard both greet the therapist and walk out of the office. Nicole immediately attaches the device to her wrist, where it has to go, in order not to forget it. Then they make their way back to the car and leave. Nicole starts to feel a little more hopeful. She looks at the small black metal, rectangular-shaped device around her wrist and smiles, feeling like it eventually could be her cure...

After a short while, the couple arrives back home and Nicole notices a familiar black car parked next to their lawn. She and Richard make their way to the front door of the house and she points at the car while facing her husband.]

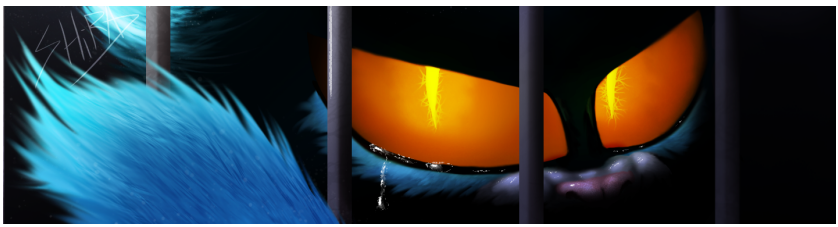
Nicole: I-is that-?

Richard: Yes, I know. I'm sorry I didn't tell you, but I thought you would heavily block this idea.

[Nicole's ears lower themselves and she looks Richard in the eye in disbelief, while her pupils turn big. She then turns around, only to see a tall blue cat with pointy ears and a smaller brown-white cat getting out of the black car. The blue cat has long whiskers, similar to Gumball's and has a stern expression on her face. The small brown-white cat has shorter whiskers and looks less stern, but grumpier than the blue cat. They walk closer and Nicole freezes while not exactly knowing what to do. Her heart sinks and she nervously holds her tail.]

Nicole: M-Mom? Dad? But what are you doing here?

Chapter 28 - 'Limit' in the roots



Richard: I told them to get here, honey. It's important that they know about the situation too and might even be able to help.

Mary: I've heard a lot from your boyfriend, but gosh dear! What in the world has happened to you?!

[Mary steps closer and hugs her daughter, who tears up in grief. They all get inside and Richard tells the kids to go to their room to entertain themselves, as he's going to have a serious talk with the Senicourts. He then offers the cats a drink and joins them at the dining table. Nicole shivers as she struggles to speak.]

Nicole: I-I'm so sorry... I let you down so badly!

Daniel: Look Nicole, I completely understand this specific man has bothered you too much and you've always had troubles with your temper... but... how could you possibly have actually *murdered* two souls?!

Mary: We didn't raise you to become a killer!

Nicole: I know, I know! I went way too far! But it wasn't my fault... I-it's not the real me who did this! I-

Mary: What do you mean?

Nicole: [Sighs] You remember the incident in the supermarket from months ago, right? Well, that monster apparently still lives inside me. I have no idea how it's possible, but I am sure it got provoked once again by Scotths.

Daniel: Nicole, we came together again before these events and agreed to one thing: we had put too much pressure on you and we didn't even notice.

Mary: We deeply missed you all those years, please remember that.

Nicole: What are you trying to say?

Daniel: That... we still love you, but don't want to be the blame of your condition.

Nicole: N-no... It's not all on you guys. I-I guess I'm just born with it... and it of course got worse by various events, but let's not mention those now.

Mary: After we got Richard's call, I looked back at the family tree and could only find one person who had the same issue as you.

Nicole: Wait, really?

Mary: Yes, you might have inherited it from her.

Nicole: Who?

Daniel: It was my father's sister, Hana. She also had horrible anger issues which eventually turned into her early death.

Nicole: Gosh, I... I didn't know this?! B-but, did she die of it then?

Mary: She wasn't strong enough to handle those stages. Everywhere beyond gaining pointy teeth and yellow eyes was too much for her. Once, she reached her worst point and... died. Her blood pressure was too high and she couldn't breathe...

Nicole: [Whispers] *The Upper Limit...*

Mary: What?

Nicole: It's the Upper Limit, Mom. But I survived through much worse scenarios than how you described hers.

Mary: That's because your genes are mixed, dear. I do believe

you're much stronger than her.

Nicole: B-but... why does it hurt so bad then? A-and... why is it so hard to control?

Mary: I'm not sure. Judging from when you struggled with your claws as a teen, you might have a stronger connection with our ancestors.

Nicole: Who are?

Mary: Cats, Nicole. They are cats.

Nicole: Oh, right. [Raises an eyebrow]

Richard: Mrs. Senicourt, do you know what we could do to cure this?

Mary: The Limit can't be cured unfortunately. But that doesn't mean it can't decrease danger.

Nicole: I got this wristband from my therapist today. He said that he's going to try to find any possible solution. I-if only there was a way to get a grip on it...

Daniel: Believe it or not, there might be.

Nicole: Really?

Daniel: You're gonna have to try to find inner peace. You need to take a break from everything that stresses you out and visit a special place.

Nicole: Where?

[Daniel writes down an address on a paper from his dairy and hands it over.]

Daniel: There you go. Believe me, you will love it.

Mary: We used to take you there when you were a kitten, but you might not remember it. But it's a place where only a cat can find

themselves and meet their ancestors.

Daniel: It can help you with getting more control over your Limit and we only hope you won't kill anyone again.

Nicole: [Sighs] Believe me, I'm not planning to. It makes me too sick...

Daniel: Very well... You can get through this, Nicole.

Nicole: Thanks for your help.

[Nicole tells her parents goodbye and they leave. She is glad they still are supportive after their previous reconciliation and is exited to visit the place they told her. She doesn't recognize the address, but might remember more when she's there, she thinks. She then hugs Richard.]

Nicole: Thank you for calling them, dear. It indeed was necessary.

Richard: No problem. We're in this together, Nicole.

Nicole: So, when will we visit this place? [Holds the paper with her paw]

Richard: I guess as quickly as possible?

Nicole: But what about the kids?

Richard: Let's take them with us. I bet another family outing could do good!

Nicole: You know how to make me smile, dear.

3.00PM

[Nicole is too excited when the Watterson family all get in the car. They're well prepared by having some bags with sandwiches for on the go and the kids are happy to have another family trip together. Richard drives, Nicole naps and the boys play a game together on their phones while Anais reads a technology magazine. Nicole still is tired as she missed a lot of sleep and Richard thinks it's rather

cute to see her laying like that.

After a long drive, they are close to their destination. A certain smell triggers Nicole's nose and she wakes up while shaking her fur. Some sort of mist makes the gate in front of the car a bit obnoxious, but they drive through it anyway. The kids look out of the windows in admiration of the almost white trees and gold-coloured buildings. Richard drives slowly and carefully as he gets near the sign next to the main entrance. He parks next to it and they all get out of the car. Richard steps closer towards the sign and reads it. 'Big Cat Rescue Park'.]

Richard: Hey, Nicole? Is this some sort of zoo?

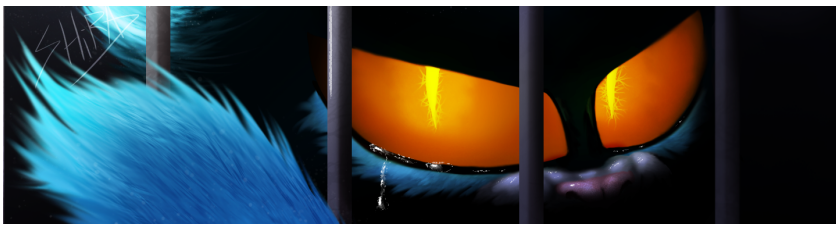
Nicole: [Walks closer] No, silly. It's a rescue centre where all sorts of felines are being kept. The ones who are strong enough get released back into the wild, while the weaker ones stay and get taken care of. [Sighs in relief] It's just like when I was little... I still remember it!

Richard: So we just go inside, or-?

Nicole: It's a public place where only cats used to be allowed inside. But as there isn't anyone around here, I think it won't be a big problem to hop inside. As long as we stick together and are careful.

[Nicole goes into the entrance and the kids follow in excitement. Richard is a bit scared, but walks after his family anyway.]

Chapter 29 - Feline connection



[The lighting inside is low, but feels cosy. A long corridor takes a u-turn around a big enclosure, where a white tiger is sleeping. Three small waterfalls, large rocks and dense vegetation create a small jungle in the enclosure and even manage to be decorative for the rest of the corridor. Nicole sniffs her nose when the smell returns. She smells the fresh, alive fish near the waterfalls. Darwin and Anais are a little bit nervous by this place, but Gumball is in full admiration of the big striped feline. The Wattersons walk further until Nicole freezes when they got past a second door. She opens it and peeks inside, only to see a rather odd cat which catches her attention. The rest of the family question where she's going, but keep standing still. Nicole opens the door further and signs her family to come inside. They then all look at the feline creature behind the glass. Its fur is whiter than snow and it looks like a generic housecat, but way bigger and more evolved. It stares into Nicole's eyes and she lowers her ears as she remembers something.]

Nicole: This cat, guys... was the first one to see my unsheathed claws and encounter me in one of my Limit stages. It was after the night when it happened for the very first time and I came here to vent on my own. I loved this place as a kid and teen. I even trusted some of these cats more than my own parents.

Darwin: C-can you... communicate with them?

Nicole: I can, but I don't want to put you at risk again.

Anais: What do you mean?

Nicole: I can only communicate with a feral cat if I bring up my

own instincts. But it's probably a bad idea as I don't want to awaken the Upper Limit again...

Richard: Look honey, your parents suggested you to come here for a reason. So, Limit or not, you are gonna do this. If you say you could fully trust this cat, it might even work as reassurance.

Nicole: A-are you sure?

Richard: We're trying everything no matter what, to do something about this condition, Nicole. Give it a chance.

Nicole: [Sighs deeply] All right. But I'm trusting you on this one. If anything goes wrong, stop me. [Sternly] No. Matter. What.

[Richard frowns and nods in full determination. Nicole is going to try it... Awakening her inner cat and trying to avoid the Upper Limit at the same time. Nicole closes her eyes and breathes heavily, getting really nervous... She starts remembering everything Brandon had done to her. She remembers one of the worst moments; the time where he wanted to let her fall from a building. How did I go too far by killing him?, she suddenly thinks. He tried to kill me first all this time! She steps away from her family when her head starts hurting; it's happening again and she managed to bring it up herself by thinking of bad memories.

Her heartbeat increases speed and she catches herself with her paws when she almost falls to the floor. She closes her eyes and hopes she got a bit used to it. Fortunately, her transformation is only partly and goes gently as the pain isn't as bad as before. That probably has to do with the fact she feels some happiness too. Her eyes turn yellow, but her pupils stay black as they constrict. Her shirt only rips at the shoulder area, exposing some of her fur and her teeth didn't even elongate that much. She feels too calm to get to a total monstrosity level.

She turns around and looks Richard in the eye with a worried expression. But he is full of hope and gestures that she can go. He opens the first glass door of the wild cat's enclosure and lets Nicole in, who carefully walks on all fours. When the glass door is closed, Nicole can move through the small, metal gate and reaches the cat.

It notices her and hisses, before recognizing her smell and fur color. The cat nervously moves forward until it and Nicole can look each other in the eye. Then, out of a sudden, the cat rubs its head on Nicole's shoulder which indicated that it trusts her. Apart from being able to speak and walk on hind legs, Nicole and the white cat have a lot in common. They both lay down and the white cat, who appears to be older, treats Nicole as if she's one of her kittens.]

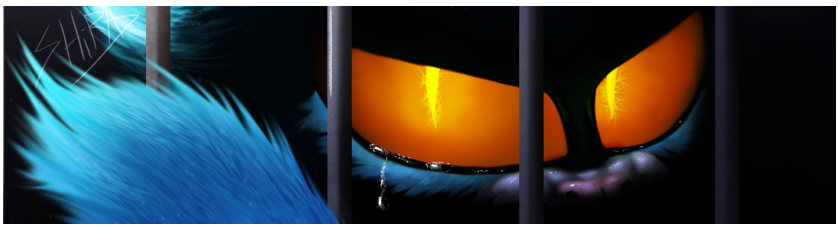
Anais: Woah... It must have been a second parent to Mom.

Gumball: Who thought our mother has a stronger bond with feral ancestors.

Anais: Must be one of the Limit's traits. I'm glad to see Mom calm like that. This was indeed a great idea from gramps Daniel and granny Mary.

[Richard and the kids hug while smiling at the lovable scenario in front of them. The scene cuts to when they are back in the car, on their way home. Richard reads 8PM on the dashboard when they crossed Elmore's border sign. He decides to grab some dinner at Joyful Burger, due it being later in the evening than expected. Nicole is asleep in the back of the car with Anais and Darwin next to her and Gumball sits in the passenger seat next to his father. Richard takes a turn and orders a meal for each his family members. Then, he drives to a hill which is not so far away from their house. He parks and the family get out of the car, except Nicole as they want to let her sleep. Richard sits down on the grass next to the front tire of the car with Anais on his lap. Gumball and Darwin sit in front of them and the four enjoy their burgers in nature's environment. The sunset, which was visible at the start of their trip back, turned into a beautiful starry night sky. Anais falls asleep in her father's big arms as soon as they finished their dinner. Richard strokes his daughter's little ears and Darwin goes checking on his adoptive mother, who was sleeping in the car earlier, but now is wide awake. She shivers a bit as she suddenly remembers a clue that the white cat told her...]

Chapter 30 - The remedy



Darwin: [Opens the door] Mrs. Mom? Are you all right?

Nicole: Y-yes I'm okay, dear.

[Darwin notices she's shivering and starts feeling a bit worried.]

Darwin: Are you sure? W-we left you some dinner we had ordered.

Nicole: Oh, thank you. [Smiles] I-it's just... something the cat told me about.

[Darwin grabs the last paper bag from the front seat and gives it to his adoptive mother, who opens it up. Darwin leaves the door open and sits down next to her. Nicole takes a bite out of her burger and sighs.]

Darwin: What was it about?

Nicole: Something like a sort of painkiller, but... to get rid of the agony within a transformation. It also would help me staying more with my normal senses and being less dangerous.

Darwin: Really? That's amazing! What exactly is it? A potion?

Nicole: Haha, no dear. It's actually a herb which I can get from local pharmacies. You dissolve it in water and drink it. It is said that it works quickly and usually is used to solve muscle problems. It might even work for the Limit...

Darwin: Then we should get some as quickly as possible, right?

[Darwin gets exited as he feels like this could actually be a solution for all the pain his adoptive mother had to go through. He patiently waits for her to finish her meal and the two join Richard and Gumball. Nicole sits down and takes the sleeping Anais on her lap as Darwin excitedly tells about the herb. They all smile and eventually go back home.]

Saturday 11.00PM

[It has been a week since Nicole and Richard visited the therapist again. They gave Nicole's wristband, but the medics unfortunately couldn't find anything helpful. This made Nicole realize how rare this condition is. She even worriedly asked if any of her kids could possibly inherit it from her, but she was relieved to hear a 'no' for an answer. This condition is only brought to its worst inside Nicole herself due all the triggers she got. She never will forget the fact the Upper Limit was provoked by Brandon. One part of her wishes it all never happened while the other is happy to finally have found a solution. The therapist couldn't do anything more, but he did inform her about the herb's name and where it exactly is being sold.

Nicole and Richard immediately bought a bunch of packages as soon as they returned from the appointment. Nicole did promise to contact Erin again, it anything goes wrong. Now, it's night-time when Richard is sitting on the bed and Nicole looks out of the window with a big smile on her face. Richard is so happy to see her like that again and his love is stronger than ever as he had started to feel less afraid. Nicole then turns her head to face him.]

Nicole: I- I think we did it, Richard. We finally found a way to properly fight it. I- I don't even feel so worried anymore. Sure, I still need to be careful, but I'm starting my shift at the Rainbow Factory again on Monday and caught up with my sleep. [Sighs in relief]

Richard: [Smiles and looks at her with pleading eyes] I'm glad I won't have to worry about you eating my ears anymore. [Laughs]

[A smirk appears on Nicole's face and she waves her tail while preparing to take the joking bunny back.]

Nicole: Oh yeah? I can still eat your ears if I want to!

[Nicole acts viciously while pouncing onto Richard, but manages not to actually hurt him. She teases him as she playfully bites in his long ears. He grabs her tail in revenge and gives it a little pull which causes her to suddenly move away from him. She didn't expect this and lets go of his ears. She then rises up again and lays down next to him. They face each other and gently touch nose-to-nose. Richard strokes one of her fluffy ears and she closes her eyes. She lets out a small meow and purrs. Richard then kisses her on her forehead and closes his eyes too.]

Nicole: [Whispers] Thank you for everything you've done for me.

Richard: It's the least I could do.

[They hug and fall asleep.]

[Nicole has gotten used to taking in her new medicine and felt much calmer overtime. She has to take it in every evening after work and she feels less stressed. Right now, she finishes off her last report and gets called by Richard. She connects her phone with the computer and puts on her headphones in order to be able to continue writing the report. She, being a great multitasker, types on her keyboard while answering her husband's call.]

Nicole: Hey, honey!

Richard: Hi there, dear! Say, how is it going there?

Nicole: It's all fine. I'm almost done with my last report and managed to turn in the spreadsheets on time. The muzzle also doesn't hurt so much anymore. [Chuckles]

Richard: I'm glad to hear that! But is that muzzle still tight then?

Nicole: [Moves her snout a bit around in the metal construction] Nah, it's fine. It's kind of like having braces, you get used to it quickly.

Richard: I see. Now tell me, would you like to go to the mall tonight?

Nicole: Oh sure! What for?

Richard: Nothing in particular. But I want to surprise our daughter with a small science kit for her birthday. Unless you already have bought a gift?

Nicole: Dear, her birthday is in two days; of course I already have something. A good mother is always on time. But I wouldn't mind if you buy it, even though it depends on how much it costs.

Richard: The gadget store has a sale at the moment, so thirty percent off everything.

Nicole: Really? Oh, that's awesome! I think you can spend my nightshift-bonus from last week on it. Then she'll have a special present, just from you.

Richard: She'll love it! And great, thanks honey.

Nicole: No problem. I expect to be home in less than half an hour, so don't start dinner without me!

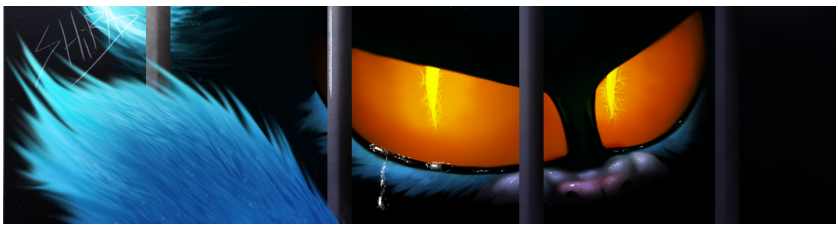
Richard: [Laughs] I'll try...

Nicole: [Chuckles] I know you will, honey. See you soon!

Richard: Bye!

[Nicole hangs up and saves the report on her computer. That silly bun, she thinks. But gosh, I love him. She then logs off her computer after turning in the files she finished today. She packs her stuff and walks towards the exit, but suddenly freezes. She sees the empty desk where Brandon used to work and her heart starts beating faster. It's okay, it's okay, she thinks. Fear and memories rise, but she tries her best to ignore it. She sternly turns around and leaves the building...]

Chapter 31 - The curse



7.30PM

[Richard and Nicole just returned from the gadget store with Anais' present and settle at the diner Dinner to drink something. After being served, the couple look each other in the eye. Richard smiles and Nicole chuckles when he almost drops his soda due him not paying attention.]

Nicole: You silly bun!

Richard: Hey, at least I managed to catch it!

Nicole: Yes you better did, because that soda was paid from my own wage!

[Richard gulps when he sees her baring her teeth, but quickly realizes she's messing with him.]

Nicole: Just kidding, just kidding. [Chuckles and sighs] It feels good not to worry anymore, dear.

Richard: I believe it does; finally some rest.

Nicole: Oh yeah, and not to mention to finally be able to prevent that horrible pain... Ugh.

Richard: Yes. [Smiles]

[Nicole wants to take another sip of her drink, but suddenly feels a shock going through her body. She freezes as it only lasted a

second, but is surprised by how much it hurt. Richard then realizes something.]

Richard: Speaking of which, have you taken in the herb tonight?

[Nicole's eyes widen out of fear when she feels an upcoming stabbing pain in her gums.]

Nicole: [Gasps] Oh no...

[She checks her mouth with her paws and gasps again when she feels sharp edges evolving on her teeth; it is slowly happening again. She holds her head and Richard immediately gets up to hug her. Nicole feels a heavy headache spiking up and closes her eyes in fright.]

Nicole: T-there's still time... B-but we need to go home right now to get the medicine!

Richard: All right, let's go!

[Richard quickly grabs the shopping bag and supports his wife as she doesn't manage to stand up straight. Her heart pounds in her chest and she feels extremely dizzy. It has been a while since it happened... Richard stressfully searches for the car keys in Nicole's purse after he let her sit down on the bench near the exit. He finds them, but can't even be happy about it as he sees a known person approaching Nicole. Nicole barely can think clearly and the pain increases agonizingly slow. She then sees the person's full appearance as she got closer. She has a spoon-shaped orange body which is accompanied by a shoulder height haircut and her little blue son stands next to her, who has a rather snobbish expression on his face.]

Felicity: Well, well, well. Look who we got here.

Nicole: F-Felicity?

Felicity: How are you surprised? Don't you think it's suspicious that a murderer is free on the streets like that?

[Nicole frowns and sighs as she remembers the fact that her

murders had gotten into the news.]

Nicole: That all happened two months ago.

Felicity: Two months or two years, I don't care! Murder is still murder!

[Richard immediately steps in when he sees Nicole is about to potentially lash out and stands in between the two women.]

Richard: I'm so sorry to interrupt, but my wife here isn't feeling well and we need to get going quickly.

Felicity: Oh really? I wonder what made her sick... Perhaps if she is allergic to *blood*!

[Nicole covers her eyes and grunts when her fangs have fully elongated now. She starts trembling and all her muscles feel like they're on fire. Her claws unsheathe and she only grunts louder and louder when her sleeves start to rip.]

Richard: [Gets extremely nervous] Oh no, no. This you see, isn't a... a very normal disease.

Felicity: What is going on with her?

Richard: I advise you to stand back... or run!

[Nicole gets on all fours and bends her back as the pain continues to get worse. She starts growling and her claws dig deeply into the mall's tiles. Felicity now starts feeling genuinely afraid and watches in terror how the entire back part of Nicole's shirt rips open and reveals extremely wild fur. Nicole screams at the top of her lungs when she opens her eyes, only to reveal that they are glowing yellow again.]

Felicity: Oh my gosh!

[She picks up Billy, her little son, and runs away while alarming the other customers.]

Felicity: Run for your life! It's a **monster**!

[The other customers flee in terror and scream when they see Nicole rise up and giving in to the chase. Her main target is Felicity who ran into the opposite direction of the mall's exit. Richard drops the shopping bag and tries running after his wife, but he is too slow. The other customers escape the mall and Felicity can't hide in the crowd anymore. Nicole angrily shakes her fur after running through the crowd and stands still to look around. Felicity manages to get on the second floor with her son and hides behind a tilted table. Nicole lowers her head and starts sniffing and follows her enemy's scent. She then takes a powerful jump and lands on the next floor, close to where Felicity is hiding.

Billy had panicked and is hiding behind the fountain, next to the tilted table. To Felicity's horror, her little son trips over his own feet and falls right into Nicole's eyesight. The blue cat immediately charges for him and jumps. She pins him down and he screams in terror when he sees the gigantic sharp teeth. Nicole drools as she tries to bite him, but Felicity quickly got away from her hiding spot and hits the big feline with a fire extinguisher. She grabs her son and sprints away to the escalators. But no matter how heavy the collision with the metal object was, it didn't stop Nicole as she immediately runs after them. She blocks their path when Felicity and Billy were right about to go downstairs. She then wants to attack Felicity, who pulls out her phone and calls the law enforcement. Felicity dodges Nicole's pounce, but her shoulder still gets scratched open by the blue feline's claws. She yells and covers the wound with her other hand while Billy runs downstairs in fright. Felicity jumps forward and runs downstairs too, only to encounter the cops who just arrived. They run inside and face the terrifying blue monster who approaches them. Richard wants to step in when they aim their tasers, but gets blocked by one of the officers.]

Officer: Stand back, sir. We will sedate this beast.

Richard: I'm afraid you're gonna need more than tasers for that...

[The officer gives the bunny a confused look, but then sees what he meant. Eight tasers get fired at the same time and Nicole freezes. Her tail and left paw twitch, but it doesn't stop her at all and she pounces onto the closest officer, immediately biting him in the

neck. He screams and blood splatters all over Nicole's snout. The other officers drop their tasers and aim their guns.]

Richard: Wait, no!

Officer: I'm sorry, sir. This is the only way.

Officer 2: FIRE!

[Richard closes his eyes when bullets race through the air, straight onto Nicole. She backs away from the wounded officer and he manages to escape. Richard opens his eyes in grief, but sees the impossible. The bullets didn't even pass Nicole's skin as they simply bounce off her fur. The Upper Limit has come to its worst and made her more powerful than ever. The officers feel doomed as they realize there's nothing they can do and Richard pushes the officer away who was holding him back. He runs to his wife and hugs her while holding her still. She violently tries to release herself from his grip and snarls viciously while trying to scare him off. But he doesn't give in. He keeps hugging and hushes her until she calms a bit down. She then takes deep breaths and her ears drop again. She realizes it is something that will haunt her forever... It is something which tires her out... She grunts and raises her head while trying to speak up.]

Nicole: [Speaks almost silently] It's a curse, Richard...

Richard: W-what?

[Nicole pushes him away and roars while her voice echoes into the air.]

Nicole: **IT'S A CURSEEEE!!!**

End of Claws of Rage – main book.

And that... is the start of this AU. Feel free to check out the sequel as well!
For now this saga is ongoing with more stuff revolving around it coming soon

I hope you enjoyed this 31-chapter interlude and thanks so much for reading! I also never expected to get to get so much attention on this story. Thanks for all the fanart, shares, reads and all other ways of support!

- Black Dog Productions

Written in 4 May – 30 September 2020